

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

*Edited by* ROBERT HERRING

VOL. 40                      CONTENTS                      NO. 77

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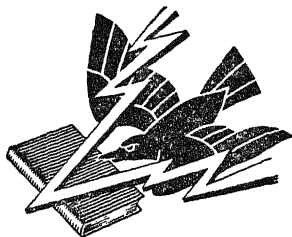
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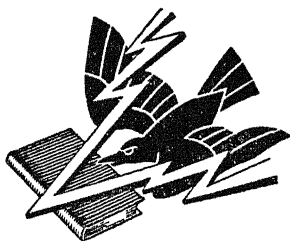
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*JOHN BETJEMAN in the DAILY HERALD*

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The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN  
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JANUARY

## EDITORIAL

1944

WRITERS, AND I hope readers, have to fight against many slogans which betoken slovenliness of mind, that civilian equivalent of "idle on parade". I have always pounced with terrier-glee on "ack-Charlie", but there is as well "in these days", that keening excuse with which people accept any wantonness. This leads on to that agony of boredom induced by those who, with the air of having performed a feat of mathematics for the million, observe so originally that we are in "the fifth year of the war".

Though true, this statement, like much else that appears to be so, is only half true. Many of us find, to our ulcered amazement, that it is the ninth year not of "this" or "the" war, but simply of war. Nine years are near a decade, or one seventh of the span normally expected. Any one of these nine have served to close the life of thousands at twenty years or less. For those gallants, expectation of life, in the insurance sense, is low; and for that reason, may they always know it, for none of the generations enclosing them, is hope in the old sense, quite at its meridian.

This differentiates the opening of this year from any others of the previous major-war-years of the century. Our spirit cannot be wholly or accurately defined as one of awe, dread, or responsibility, but it can be expressed in the words with which it was so generally, not greeted, but faced. . . . "I'd have the year end soon, and you and I meet at the end of it."

This, be it marked, in the one year that we have by the

standards of four years ago most to celebrate. Those standards have gone. Not only the old world went in September, 1939, but the old view of war too. It made it the more painful to embark on war. A war not only "worse" than the last (all are that), but no longer seen as previous wars had been, an unruly dog soon to be quelled. We entered this present illness as voluntary but protesting germs, either to kill the patient or prevent in it this recurring crisis of a malignant disease. For the first time, we didn't respect the disease. We found it, as doctors do, a bore. Like certain doctors, we knew we had to go into it, be eaten up, to find the cure—or, since the cure was always there, make it acceptable.

Easier to hide than cure—and once the Black Death is on us, all but a few embrace the Danse Macabre. This war, the blackest death, involving life, of the many we have so far allowed ourselves, brings no hope for restoration of a lost world. It was that which led to it. With no escape into the past—and tension snaps if it never lessens—the only escape for those who needed it was into what may be called the weaklies' Future.

Just as centuries' old religious intolerance has been replaced by political dogma, without altering in the least the hearts of born heretics, so to-day Reconstruction has taken the place of "escapism". I have always tilted at the Reconstruction offered us as merely the contemporary form of that escapism against which its present perpetrators were most loud in the last days of peace. And I would stress "contemporary form" because so many tend to think that things are altered and events controlled, once new forms are given to them.

Change, of course, depends on new forms. But the giving of new forms does not necessarily imply change. Change is not discernible. You can measure life in terms of breath, and death as cessation of frame's function. But the moment

of change baffles the most believing Bede to chronicle. Not even social change can be measured by man's life or history's record. All that can be seen, as it is felt, is growth or retrogression.

Progress there truly is. Through the aeons, a painful inch is gained. But the advance is spiral, not straight-forward. Possibly in one century humanity may manage to find itself half a millimetre "ahead", in what we mean by "civilization", of one two thousand years ago. But it is ahead only relatively, as a person on a spiral staircase at Kew is ahead of an oncomer below. Between those two there is as little difference as in means of locomotion from chariot and cart, train, car, and plane. Each is the most advanced its age can produce. Similarly bow, sling, gun, bomber are continuance of forms of killing. The form may change; the force behind remains the same. Who talks of reconstruction? Do they mean reconstitution?

From house to flat, from road to roundabout—how characteristic of this age it is that our Reconstruction lands on the most material side, and that materially! For, whilst rebuilding, few have determined there shall be no more that assault on eye and ear which make our buildings harmful—I refer, first, to that general lack of sound-proofing which charitably ensures us that we shall not hear the one radio programme in a month we may wish to, because of our neighbours, or else enables us, through their own, to hear the very one we had avoided. As to eye, assaulted like ear, those of us who pay rates have yet small voice in determining the appearance of our streets. Little use it might seem to many, planning, never so well, what buildings they may, so long as sky-signs deface them with their predatory yells on anxiety and the more intestinal forms of health or lack of it. The argument against street advertising is not so much that it covers crudely buildings that might best not be seen. It is that it tires us.

Advertisements must tire, that sales-resistance be weakened. But in that new world in which we are all going to enjoy Security, sales-competition would be lessened.

We hear none of this, because to attack advertising would be not to storm, so to speak, the barricades, but to undermine what are still the foundations. Reconstruction dare not attack.

Similarly, Security is but a sky-sign. It is not that people should be secure, but what will happen to them if they are, that is of moment. Not what is on top, but what goes on within the building. . . .

Once, it was held for acclaim that, after years of civil war and invasion, a man could walk through England, broad and long, without attack. He had not long found that, before he attacked overseas. . . .

Earlier, a man found a stone. Two things he did with it : put it in a sling or spear to destroy ; pile others on top, to build. What he destroyed were wild beasts. What he built against was to keep them out. And having achieved this security—he did not sit back and enjoy it. He attacked other men. He, who had come to terms with his foes, made other foes. He attacked men, and they him, because he had more stones, slings, walls, animals dead or tamed. Man against man, tribe against tribe. Man, picking up that first stone, aeons ago, looked at his own skull, Hamlet-wise, ten thousand years hence. . . . But in that skull lay a worm that took longer to grow than a body and is harder to kill. It becomes, if unbroken, a brain, and when it has grown, uncoils to a question-mark, saying “ Why ? ” The body that bore it, through which it has bored, finds gradually that this which has wormed its way through its consciousness, takes control. Body’s actions and appetites are now queried, its attitudes told. Body, no longer in charge, no longer charges ; its rampancy’s reined. Easy to think brain has conquered, and lusts and limbs now are Tamburlaine’s

kings. But the brain, don't forget, is embodied ; it carries the hue of its housing.

Flesh may no longer flauntingly rule, yet brain's tinged by its tyranny, and that at the moment of what seems thereby peace. It might seem impasse is fixed. But what made brain uncoil ? What first melted its glacial sleep ? A minute flame inside it, of which Spirit is so far the name.

There may have been moments when that has seemed to take over. But never for long, and far from wholly yet. When most it nears freedom, brain seeks to abort it—and then the old body, knowing brain exhausted, resumes domination. Spirit, panting, the one part of us that trembles to live, fights with intensity the only dying part of us, with all the hatred of Fairy Queen against Demon King in those folk-lore performances which are called pantomimes . . . a hatred, be it noticed, which uses the living bodies of " mortal " characters, be they Jack, Jill, Hoods Riding or Robin, and the rest, for its combat.

In this war, which I feel myself as a flight of hooded birds of horror, lustreless in wing and bright only in tearing blind beak, at least the realization of the foul odour of denial marks some bellow-spurt, keeping Spirit alive. Marks, not change, but progress—little enough to set beside the giants' stride, but, considering our puniness, at least effort, and the willingness to make effort when we are well.

If, in view of our Spirit's as yet unformulated designs, both New Year and New World seem puerile pinpricks on the Madonna-blue print of a heaven not ours to inherit, it does not hurt the mind's muscles to smile. It keeps them elastic. Elastic they must be, for we know that talk of merely material Security is based finally on fright. Fright from the past is " worse " than fright of the future, and the desire for security is as unhelpfully unnatural as Peter Pan's wish, vide Rachel Ferguson, not to grow up. Seen as that, Security can be smiled at as one further form of the force that

produced this and all other wars—not the desire for power, which one would be a cripple without, but the need for self-importance: whence evil, greed, starved affection and impotence come. In this year, which many hence may well find it may have been a peculiarity to have been alive in, our wish is “May the minute and warring elements which, by their stress, make up our selves, be of no account, save in the life and work we hand on, when we are able to leave”.



# SOME COMMENTS ON MY BOOKS

By NORMAN DOUGLAS

(concluded)

## IN THE BEGINNING

*eight extracts (pp.           )*

MY PRIVATELY PRINTED edition appeared in 1927 and consisted of seven hundred copies, all but about thirty being now sold. I forget the price. For the binding I chose a variety of designs; the paper was the same as that used for my *Birds and Beasts*—the best hand-made on the market, and the type is Elzevir, one of my favourites. How much prettier it is than many of our freakish modern founts! I also replaced the clumsy English system of inverted commas for conversations by the French method, as being more convenient and reposeful to the eye and equally intelligible. Also: no numberings or titles for the chapters.

If the book reads smoothly, that is because I took unusual trouble with the writing. Two or three commercial English Editions exist, the last being that of the Pelham Library. Their text has been emasculated; some ten sentences were deleted out of respect, I suppose, for the refined sensibilities of the British bourgeois. Americans must have coarser natures, for they reprinted the original text as it stands. One remembers that, not so long ago, certain works by an eminent English writer, Havelock Ellis, were not procurable save in American editions. Is this state of affairs to our credit? In one of the passages here reproduced (page     ) the reference to "horses" is obscure, because an earlier sentence which would explain it has been cut out.

The tale is woven round that of Ninus and Semiramis, and I consulted everything that ancient writers, and not a few of their modern commentators, have told us about this remarkable couple and their period, unearthing, incidentally, other little details which have helped to build up the story.

This book was a strain on my inventive faculties. Some twenty new words were coined, and a fresh Heaven had to be created with eight major deities, as well as half-gods and demons and a brace of gentle satyrs, not to speak of hitherto unknown races of men. Lucian was of some help in regard to the divine members of this community, while the Great Father himself is modelled upon my conception of that old Jahveh of the Jews :

“At the Sun’s announcement, his divine lineaments revealed themselves all roseate with satisfaction, and into those blue eyes came a look of ineffable wisdom and malice. . . .”

For the other Immortals I found no prototypes. The amusements of some of them are not such as would appeal to our sense of humour ; these perverse ones must be having good fun just now, watching us while we blow each other to pieces in battles that will end only to begin again. The moral ? Fun for the gods is not fun for mortals. Our human race made that sad discovery long ago.

Whenever desirable I played ducks and drakes with chronology and suchlike. Why not ? *In the Beginning* is an allegory and no history. This suggested the importation of one or two deities alien to my local theocracy and a few trifling geographical displacements. The Himalayas, for example, were shifted from their present position to form the boundary between Mesopotamia and an imaginary China. It suited my purposes, and the ‘Himalayas have hitherto raised no objection.

In *Looking Back* (p. 432-434) I gave a reason why this book might well be distasteful to more than one reader. “It lacks the admixture of saccharine which is prescribed by the taste of to-day. . . . He would have liked me to insert a touch of that “hopefulness” with which the present generation loves to delude itself, in defiance of the teaching of all history. . . . The vanity of human en-

deavour : where shall you find a better example than in Assyria ? ” And then one thinks of all the other civilizations that have gone the same way—the moral ? Nothing on earth is permanent save only change, unless, of course, we include the changeless race of Gods, the Great Father and his more or less disreputable brood of children—call him Jupiter if you like—those phantoms whom we create in our own image and endow with our own varying facets of good or bad humour, of lust and wisdom and malice and inconstancy.

The demon Aroudi and the Wind are attractive Immortals, and Menetha gives utterance to such platitudes as one may expect from a Goddess of Wisdom. Among earth-dwellers I like the Court physician with his ambiguous pedigree and non-ambiguous method of combating the goodness-germ. Dame Fattuta (*fa tutto* : she does everything) was something of a “trouvaille”. She is a corrective, and provides that refreshing intrusion of low life into regal surroundings which Shakespeare would have commended.

Two misprints :

p. 176 line 10 from bottom *for* both felt *read* felt both

p. 182 line 7 from bottom *for* Maiden. She *read* Maiden, she

A third is not worth mentioning.

An American reviewer made a remark to the effect that this book “contains no loose ends”. I should like to shake hands with that man. I had paid particular attention to this point and am delighted to think that he noticed it.

A correspondent in New York also sent me a number of drawings for *In the Beginning*. They were admirably conceived, with just the right seasoning of phantasy. I think it was Mr. Charles Cullen. It is unlikely that these lines should ever reach his eye ; if they do, I would beg him to note that I kept the pictures only in the hope that sooner or later there would be a demand for an illustrated

edition of this book, even as there are already four illustrated ones of *South Wind*.

## BIRDS AND BEASTS OF THE GREEK ANTHOLOGY

Here are five extracts (pp.           ) from this book, and I should like to draw attention to the remarkably good paper and print of the private edition; if its binding leaves something to be desired, that is because I had not yet learned that there was only one reliable binder in Florence. The English commercial edition contains some fresh material, and the American one has an entertaining Preface by Will Percy, the poet.

The heaviness of these extracts was unavoidable if the present book was to be a kind of cross-section of all my others. Let me apologize by saying that I could have chosen even heavier ones without much trouble, such as the discussion on the adjective *xouthos* when applied to animal coloration.

The book was written at Monza. I still like the introduction, and the whole idea of the thing. Monographs of this kind, to my way of thinking, have a charm of their own, and become more appetizing in proportion as the field of inquiry is restricted. "The Flora of Canterbury Cathedral": what a delightful subject! I wrote one on the Street Games of London; now I hear that someone is patiently investigating the peculiar flora of our bombed areas. Good luck to him! (After the Great Fire, I believe, the place was invaded by the rocket, *eruca*). And those gaping wounds that reveal so dismally the structure and composition of our houses have lately suggested to me another essay on similar lines—an essay by some enthusiastic and leisured expert tracing the evolution from early days of our building materials, their kinds, their places of origin and modes of application. The "Geology of London"

would be an attractive theme and one after my own heart, if my knowledge of London were not slight and of geology slighter. Perhaps something of this sort has already been written.

Two friends at Athens whose help is acknowledged in these pages are now dead—Petrocochino and Atchley. I knew them over a number of years and have mentioned the first in *Looking Back*. "Petrocock," one of the founders of the Anglo-Hellenic League, was kindness itself. They gave him a C.B.E. for his services to our nation. Though he was neither young nor in particularly good health, I cannot help thinking that the distresses of his country may have hastened his end. As to Atchley of the British Legation—he knew more about the Greek language and people and countryside than many a native. He once told me that he was collecting materials for a Flora of Crete. In his posthumously published Greek Flora will be found some information about his life, and the Athens papers also had cordial obituary notices of him. He died during an excursion on the slopes of Mount Kyllene; they buried him in the nearest village. This mountain, according to Aristotle and Lindermayer, was famous for its race of white black-birds. Atchley himself was something of that kind. Now I have no friends left in Greece. And the two others, Brooks and Mann, who contributed the poems to this book, are likewise no more. Dead, all four of them—in how short a space of time!

As no fresh edition of *Birds and Beasts* is ever likely to appear there is one thing I should like to say, namely, that my comment on Martial's epigram about the Sauroktonos will not hold water. The correct—and improper—interpretation of these lines is given on page 194 and footnote of H. Licht's *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*; Routledge, 1932....

For the last sixty-six years I have been intending to visit the Selborne of Gilbert White. Two weeks ago that feat

was accomplished, and during the return journey in the train the following notes on the Geology of London were jotted down : " London may have remained a wood-town longer than some others owing to the scarcity of rock in the London basin and the difficulty of transport from elsewhere. Curious historical data to be unearthed on the transition from wood to stone. Chapter on the main ingredients of to-day's architecture, the commoner varieties of stone, where found, how worked, at what cost ? Nothing fresh can be expected in the domain of everyday building material ; all the sources are known and exploited. No volcanic rock : contrast with Edinburgh. Chapter on ornamental stones, sedimentary and primitive. Sources not all exploited ; new kinds now being discovered and imported from different countries. (1) *Sedimentary* : marbles plain and coloured from Italy, Belgium, etc. Describe twelve principle kinds. Plain : white, black, too much bilious yellow. Coloured : absence in London of types common in Paris like Porto Venere and Levanto. Query : is our dark green the Verde di Calabria ? English alabaster too soft, except the Carlisle variety ? (2) *Plutonic* : granites and porphyries red and grey from Scotland, Sweden, etc. Describe their species, *provenance*, date of introduction, method of working. Whether their beauty and resistance to atmospheric influences compensates for high cost of production and transport, and explains their growing popularity ? Commercial and technical details. Scant mineralogy save to note, e.g., the decorative value of felspar crystals or mountain limestone fossils. Corsi, in his book on Roman marbles, indicates where the finest specimens of each kind can be seen. The same could be done here.

A special excursus on structures like the Thames Embankment. Statues and monuments of whatever material are adventitious elements ; not an integral part of London geology ; omit.

Underfoot. Paving-blocks and cobbles of diverse mineral classes. Haymarket the last West-end street to lose cobbles (risky descent for hansom-cabs). Hay Hill not cobbles but sets. Sandstone flags are being displaced by cement compositions; the once universal road-mettle of syenite has given way to asphalt and asphalted wood. Kerbs of gneiss or suchlike may count on a long life.

Appendixes on slate: artistic disaster, economic god-send. On glazed tiles, their cheery and ageless lustre. On bricks: once purely utilitarian, now employed æsthetically with success either alone or in combination with stone. Modern and mediaeval kilns compared as to output and quality. Red colour best, though pleasing effects might be obtained by judicious marriage of black and white. Mellowed by a light deposit of coal dust and marred by a heavy one. Appendix on concrete, which lends itself cheaply and gaily to every architectural atrocity and may end in supplanting stone-work altogether. Another on *pastiches*, freak and imitation stones invented by the ancients but unknown here till lately; now favourites; their infinite range of colour, strange processes of manufacture, prices and weathering capacities. Footnote on recent inroads of metal and glass on house-façades. Another on the unfitness in our climate of any kind of painted plaster, unless the owner will renew the surface more frequently than he does."

Notes less amateurish than these (I have doubtless forgotten the main things to be said) might be welded into a pleasing volume with illustrations such as the picturesque marble mines of Carrara, a Welsh slate-quarry, workmen sawing up a block of Bath stone: one could easily name a round dozen. We have the *Birds of London*; why not *Stones of London*? It would be a document in its small way. For the face of the town is changing, and the stones of to-day are not quite those of yesterday, nor yet those of to-morrow.

## SUMMER ISLANDS

Five extracts (pp.       ) from *Summer Islands*, a disproportionate number considering the small size of this thing, which contains merely two articles on the islands of Ischia and Ponza. The reason is that I have a particular affection for this antiquated and flowery booklet, an affection merging into wistfulness and even melancholy as I turn its pages.

If one is never supremely happy for more than a moment, I was seldom nearer that condition than during those days, not moments, which were spent in July, 1908, on Ponza. As to Ischia—I have been there over and over again, the first time nearly fifty years ago and never save in congenial company or else blissfully alone; and never otherwise than happy, although on more than one occasion, round about 1900, I had to be transported there on the steamer of the Naples Zoological Station and then carried to my lodgings, being crippled with rheumatism in every joint. (Gratitude to the mineral baths must not be left out of account.) Few foreigners can know Ischia better than I do, and few natives. On one of my most recent visits to the place I was with G. M. Orioli, who has left a record of our walks there in Chapter 19 of his *Adventures of a Bookseller*. I have also mentioned it on pp. 294–297 of *Looking Back*, and elsewhere.

This little book has been printed and is at present being bound in Lord Carlow's Corvinus Press, in *thirty* copies. As there is small chance of its ever being published again and as hardly anybody save a subscriber is likely to see a copy, I will transcribe a passage or two from my "Dedictory Letter" written last year, for the sake of its bibliographical interest:

"The first of these articles appeared no less than thirty-three years ago under its present title, in the *English Review* of February, 1909. Some of the material was subsequently



incorporated in my *Siren Land* (1911), and Chapter XVI of *South Wind* contains a burlesque of Iasolini's description of the mineral baths of Ischia, to which I refer here on page 6. Joseph Conrad deals with this *English Review* paper in a letter which has been printed (*Life and Letters*, vol. ii, p. 67).

"As to the second—my account of the Ponza Islands was printed under its present title in the *English Review* of April, 1913. I utilized the geological features of this group, over-coloured for literary purposes, to describe the cliff-scenery of Nepenthe in *South Wind*, whereas the pumice-stone industry of that imaginary place, as well as its decayed bathing-establishment of Saint Elias, were inspired by what I saw elsewhere, on Lipari. The minerals mentioned in *South Wind* are such as occur on Ponza; nearly all of them.

"Not long after this, *Scribner's Magazine* wrote that they would be glad to print the Ponza article for their American readers and it was agreed that I should send them some coloured illustrations. These were done in pastel from my photographs by C. C. Coleman of Capri (the "Christopher Goldfinch" of Compton Mackenzie's *Vestal Fire*) and under my supervision, in order that there should be no mistake about the correct tints of rock and sea. I thought them admirable of their kind. But (though they paid for it) they never printed the article; I cannot say why. Nor do I know what became of the pastels.

"Then, in 1931, these two papers were reprinted in book form under their present title by my friend Desmond Harmsworth (Kemp Hall Press, Oxford). I cannot help thinking that the undertaking would have been more successful if he had been in a position to supervise it personally. As it was, none of the twelve or fifteen photographs, save old Iasolini's map, were reproduced; which annoyed me considerably, since I had taken them with

great care to illustrate certain points in the text. This edition, I hear, was remaindered long ago. (It was).

"Later on—I forget the exact date—the Pynson Printers of New York produced an American issue of this booklet under the same title. I sent them the photographs, but instead of using them as they were, they employed some cheap draughtsman to convert a selection of them into pictures, with the result that their only value, their local flavour, was drained out of them. One gained a false impression from such drawings; they might have done for almost any other part of the world, and this annoyed me even more. The publishers subsequently wrote to tell me that their venture had not been a profitable one. Serve them right! I was delighted to hear it.

"Now I should like to present you with these photographs, but I cannot. They are inaccessible at the moment—in Italy, and this annoys me most of all, because I feel sure you would have appreciated their Mediterranean aroma and neither left them out of the book nor turned them into childish 'pictures'."

## TOGETHER

*Together* has been out of print for some time and there are about twenty corrections and additions to be made if a new edition is ever to be published. Here, meantime, are eight extracts (pp. ) from this book. It contains portrait-sketches of friends and relations set in that frame of mountain and forest which was the earliest landscape that ever greeted my eyes, and one which I shall probably not see again. Most of these people died long ago. I shall linger over "Mr. R." who was very much alive at the time of writing, and an instructive example of how children should not be brought up. Now that he is dead, this book has become for me a little monument to his memory.

Our first meeting is described in *Looking Back*, and I

find that in *Together* I speak of certain brigand-strains in his character (p.14). This is correct, but hardly forcible enough; primitive strains would be more appropriate. For it did not take me long to notice that the words "discomfort" or "hardship" had no meaning for this boy, whereas certain virtues deemed primeval counted for much. He could put up with anything, with anything except school-work. He loathed his college at Menton and all it contained and all it implied. This, of course, led to a state of chronic friction at home. The parents lamented that since the age of eight his school-reports had been consistently bad; now couldn't I perhaps do something about it? Well, I had observed that single all-consuming passion of his for practical mechanics inherited (or not) from some cave-haunting, tool-fashioning ancestor. Machines and suchlike were his joy, his dream. Impossible to keep him away from smithies and garages and workshops, and whenever he disappeared mysteriously and was required for anything, you were sure to find him at one or the other of these places.

Such being the case, I suggested over and over again to his people that it would be wasting both their money and his time to keep him at school. I went further. I made myself answerable for it that six years hence, at the age of twenty, he would be self-supporting and happy, with a permanent interest and an assured position in life. In vain. His father had followed the bent of so many Corsicans: climb into some administrative post, sit tight, and retire as *rentier*; his children should do likewise and must therefore pass the preliminary *baccalauréat* examination in some college or lycée. Accordingly René, growing ever more resentful, was nailed down in Menton till the fateful day approached. He failed to pass, and even this did not convince the father, who kept him at that institution for the next year's trial. Another miss.

At the age of twenty, when he should have been contented and earning good money, he was at last released from his detested "bahut", morally embittered and intellectually *abrutit*. Six and more of the most important years of his life—wasted ! Worse than wasted. The boyish tool-making instinct had been done to death by that strain of withering application, and there was nothing to take its place. It was a case of atrophy. His education, the *educing* of such faculties as he possessed, was definitely dislocated even as that of thousands of young Englishmen is being dislocated at this moment. Something should be done about our tragical education-fetich. But—*vex clamantis*. For "soon we shall be doing sums when we might be getting married", as I wrote long ago.

The years between then and his death in 1932 were spent by René in drifting about from one job to another in a state of apathetic indifference, and in ruining his once formidably robust health. He now cared little about health or anything else. *Tant pis* : it was his watchword, his philosophy of life. Towards the end he became usher in a school at Vence near Nice, where his knowledge of games made him a favourite with the boys (he had been captain of the Menton College team). Thence into that sanatorium out of which he was moved in the nick of time to die in a dingy cottage specially hired for that purpose. It is not a pretty way to treat the dying, but the same thing had happened two years earlier to D. H. Lawrence who, at his last gasp (so to speak), was also taken out of that establishment to expire elsewhere.

Both were buried at Vence, though Lawrence's remains were presently shifted to Mexico after an exhumation concerning which I could tell a tale so gruesome that it might give pain to one who is still alive. René nearly shared the same fate. About three years later his father, in a fit of belated tenderness, proposed sending the coffin to Moltifao,

birthplace of all the family ; what did I think of the plan ? I managed to dissuade him. The idea of a posthumous trip from Vence to Corsica would not have appealed to René. Let him rest where he lies ! In any case he cannot rest there much longer, since his bones will be ousted to make room for some newcomer. It is not a pretty way to treat the dead, but the same thing would have happened at Moltifao sooner or later.

Moltifao . . . now I wonder how many of our English tourists have been there ? Or rather : have any of them ever heard of the place ? It lies off their tracks.

Memories of walks and talks with René were clinging to me as I entered it for the first time on the 20th August, 1937. Both parents were there, and I commend the view from the windows of their home. One soon realizes that Corsican cliff-scenery distils a magic peculiar to itself. It is more fairy-like and benignant than that of the Alps ; more *intimate*. Those crags are saturated with luminous vibrations such as are never seen further North. Glancing out of that window I beheld a confusion of pinnacles and ravines as theatrical as any of them, quite fantastic and yet, somehow or other, familiar ; where had I seen it before ? It was a stage-decoration in some brigand-opera like *Fra Diavolo*—enough.

I am glad that Orioli, in his *Adventures of a Bookseller*, speaks well of my friend. " René was one of the most companionable and delightful youngsters I have met in my life. He used to talk to me about his two visits to the Vorarlberg ; he gave me such a craving to see that place that later on I had to go there. I was terribly sorry to hear of his death. He died in the early spring (*this is not quite correct*) of 1932 at Vence, and Norman went there to be with him. There are some people who ought never to die. René was one of them."

P.S. Here are a few corrections to the text of *Together*—omitting ten or twelve minor ones :

p. 17, line 11 from bottom. I must have been fuddled, confusing the brothers Grimm with Andersen.

p. 52, line 2 from top. *For* this as *read* that is.

p. 97, line 3 from bottom. These lines are said to be by Goethe, which I did not know in spite of an overdose of him at a German school.

p. 165, line 13 from bottom. Zurich. There is also the village of Zurigo on Malta, once famous for its blue-eyed people. Probably a prehistoric root, both Malta and Zurich being neolithic stations.

p. 166, line 16 from bottom. Forty metres is too high ; forty feet too low.

p. 177, line 6 from bottom. *Delete* not.

p. 182, last line. *For* left *read* right.

p. 217, line 11 from top. Dean Ramsay. I cannot find the reference. It must be in some other local Memoirs.

p. 218, line nine from bottom. *For* five *read* six.

## ALONE

Twelve extracts (pp.           )

Were I forced to spend the remaining years of life on some desert island with no companion save one of my own books—unenviable fate !—I should choose *Alone*. A nostalgic and multiherbal fragrance hangs about those pages. They conjure up a legion of friendly ghosts—memories that are fading away, towns and villages never to be revisited, voices that I cannot well hope to hear again. The book is too short for my taste ; I would have it longer. One craves to savour more keenly the pleasures of those days and to discover yet more details, however insignificant, of what befell during the months when, at the age of fifty, I exhaled the last breaths of an inconstant youth by the wayside of a beaten track in Italy. There are

moments, like the present one, when the yearning for that past life grows insistent and hard to bear. On such occasions what's to be done? Why, close the book. Be the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears.

Nearly the whole of *Alone* appeared in sixteen periodical instalments (1918-1920) in that *Anglo-Italian Review* which was edited by my old friend Edward Hutton to whom the book was dedicated. This monthly being run on economical lines he could not afford to pay me more than three pounds or guineas an article; it meant a good deal during that impecunious time in Paris of which there is a short record here (p. ).

The *Evergreen* Edition is the only one I have at hand, and here are one or two corrections:

p. 26. What I said about the Merle Blanc restaurant at Monte Carlo no longer holds good. Change of management.

p. 33. That wonderful agave-plant is now gone. Good specimens of *medio-picta* in the Jardin Exotique at Monaco.

p. 112, line 10 from top. *For gentle read genteel.*

p. 127, line 14 from top. *For only read one.*

p. 151, line 14 from top. *For or read and.*

p. 221. Ramage visited Alatri in 1828 and could not have seen the walls, as they were not laid bare till 1843.

p. 226. Footnote. The first of these two megalithic structures is *not* visible from the sea.

p. 232, line 11 from bottom. *For about read but.*

These are a few of them. There are twice as many misprints in the *Evergreen* Edition as in the original one, with which I have just compared it.

## HOW ABOUT EUROPE

*Six extracts (pp. )*

One does not shake books, even small ones like this, out of one's sleeve; nor yet without incurring certain expenses.

Besides a mass of newspapers and periodicals, nearly one hundred authors had to be bought and consulted—partly in a quest for fresh information and partly to corroborate opinions already formed. This cost me between thirty-five and forty pounds.

*How about Europe* requires to be periodically brought up to date. Modifications are necessary here and there, since life will never be at a stand-still.

Returning to England after a long absence, I note certain changes for the better. The men are more alert than they were; children healthier in spite of the War; and the women better-mannered, better-looking, and better dressed: this last being in part the result of uniforms, which prevent some of them from displaying bad taste in the selection of clothes. Society has become pleasantly elastic; more intimacy, less snobbery and frumpishness. Literature reflects our national troubles, while private literary plagues like Jimmie Douglas and Joynson-Hicks have been eliminated by the merciful hand of time.

I am not in love with architectural innovations, though good work has been done also in this line. Certain squares should have been left unscarred; if such vandalism had threatened the Place Vendôme in Paris a public outcry would have forced the Ministry of Fine Arts to intervene and rescind the project, as actually happened at Versailles. Now, instead of seemly mansions each with its own associations, we have barracks for the stowage of our bureaucratic octopus; uglier things were never reared by man. We are wrecking our own inheritance. The destruction of places like Devonshire and Chesterfield House was an outrage, a job which might have been left to the Germans.

Such documents in stone, the produce of our hands, should be respected; whence this lack of pride in our achievements? We seem to have more reverence for the deeds of men than for their works; why? The spirit of



ten thousand heroic soldiers can be replaced in a generation; what shall replace the spirit of Park Lane, so orderly and yet diversified, so English to the core? Could nothing have been done by that *London Society*, which concerns itself with "the beauty of the Capital City, the preservation of its old charms, and the careful consideration of its new developments"? Up to a few years ago the grace of the eighteenth century was lingering in abundant measure. Since then, this harmony has been progressively smothered under a *salade russe* of hybrid horrors, and the day may dawn when commercial rapacity coupled with a lymphatic indifference to beauty and tradition—Philistinism, in short—will have reduced London to the condition of Sparta where, in spite of its immense power, hardly a stone, says Thucydides, will be worth preserving. (He was right. Nothing is left.)

A well-worn theme. . . .

At the risk of offending certain readers who have already complained I must stick to what I said on p. 261 about the Romans. After thinking and observing and reading and talking as much as is good for any man of seventy-five I am driven to the conclusion that the Romans did a disservice to mankind when they introduced Christianity. The result of my reflections is that I can discover nothing original in that patchwork compilation, nothing that was not said in earlier days and sometimes in nobler language. A conspectus of Christian tenets, giving chapter and verse whence they were drawn, will be found in works like McCabe's *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*. By their fruits ye shall know them. This gospel of brotherly love, one of several, has been planted in our lands for two thousand years. Will it ever bear fruits more palatable or nutritious than those of to-day?

In a suggestive book lately published (Oscar Levy: *The Idiocy of Idealism*) the author traces the origins of both

Hitlerism and Bolshevism to the Bible—to the Jews, as he prefers to say. I agree with him. The first, he argues, has its roots in the Chosen-People and Pure-Race nonsense with which the Old Testament is saturated (good specimens in Ezra and Nehemiah) and which was eagerly sucked up by those passionate Bible-readers, the Germans, who twisted it into their contemptible Herrenvolk doctrine. The second has its roots in that envy of the rich which crops up repeatedly in the New Testament (woe unto you that are rich, etc.; it is easier for a camel, etc.; conveniently contrary texts, as usual, are at hand). Would it be right to say that Christianity is based to an overwhelming extent on envy of the rich and glorification of the proletariat, that Bolshevism is based on Christianity even as Hitlerism is based on the Hebrew Prophets? If right, then the Romans must be held responsible for importing the ancestor of these two pests. Mithraism, a worthier creed, ran that ancestor a close second for a while; then proved too reasonable for the neurotic and vulgarized soul of contemporary Rome.

A propos of such things, the thought has sometimes occurred to me that certain free-thinking friends may presently have occasion to fear that I went to my grave a *demi-vierge* where matters of belief are in question. I should not care to die a *demi-vierge* in any sense of that word. Let me try to console them by saying that God, to my mind, did not invent us and our world but that we invented Him. Nothing new in this; *timor fecit deos*. Also that the universe has always existed and always will exist. Here is a bigger pill to swallow; alternative ones are bigger still. That there should ever have been an act of creation on the part of some Supreme Being is for me pure anthropomorphism. Our childlike habit of manufacturing Gods to explain what we do not understand! Lovers of the Starry Host may torment themselves with conundrums about its

Maker : why not ? I have a sufficiency of other occupations. In my eyes the ever-changing Cosmos has lain serenely distended without beginning or end since pre-adolescent days (*Together*, p. 54), and by this time I am more than ever tired of "Great Beings" and their conjuring tricks . . .

*How About Europe* was privately printed at Florence about 1928—I have no copy here to decide the date—and in the Bodoni type which is no great favourite of mine, though some of those Paduan editions like the two-volume Virgil could not be comelier. When this issue was exhausted an English commercial one appeared, a chaste volume of which I likewise possess no specimen. This was followed by reprints in the Phoenix and now Pelham Library series. The Americans (Harpers) brought the book out as "Good-bye (? Farewell) to Western Culture"—a title more alluring and intelligible to their public than its first one. It must have been an attractive production to judge by a copy bound in red morocco, which the publishers were kind enough to send me.

Our reviewers did not take kindly to the book. This is hardly surprising in view of its matter and manner, and I was hoping, though in vain, that some of them would try to trip me up over my facts. One of the longest and best notices—by "best" I mean of course the most favourable—was by Arnold Bennett who, however, did not approve of my saying that nine-tenths of the reformers of humanity had been mischief-makers or humbugs. He thought it a little unfair. Well, one must make allowances. Bennett was always an optimistic sort of creature and disposed to see the bright side of things, especially after dinner. He also said, I think, that "every Englishman should read this book".

So he should.

And he won't.

P.S. May I draw attention to the last three words ?

Many of us would have written "But he won't". I have said somewhere that *but* is the most debilitating and misused monosyllable in our language. Try the experiment and you will see that a written passage grows more emphatic in proportion as *buts* are omitted—save in conversations, where their use and even abuse is always legitimate.

### THEY WENT

Four extracts (pp. ) from *They Went*, the writing of which was concluded at Menton after the war and when I was feeling comfortable again. It had been begun at St. Malo two years earlier, but interrupted owing to lack of food. "Some of us are supposed to produce our best efforts under the stimulus of privations; such a state of affairs paralyses my initiative. I must be well fed, like those mousing cats who capture mice not to still the pangs of hunger but for sport. No starving cat will throw its soul into the task of sitting in front of a mouse-hole motionless hour after hour, for the fun of possibly seeing a mouse emerge. Hunger has made it listless and apathetic; it drifts away. Even so, here in Paris, I drifted away from *Theophilus*."

*Theophilus*: that was the original title which the then publishers changed into the present cheap and nasty one for purposes of publicity, I suppose. They cannot have objected on principle to a proper name as a book-title, since it was they who published *Nicholas Nickleby* and those others. I never see the words "*They Went*" without a little feeling of nausea.

This story of the semi-legendary Princess Ahès was so well engraved on my mind that its twenty chapters were written in the following order: 9, 12, 3, 13, 5, 7, 16, 20, 11, 1, 8, 18, 2, 6, 17, 19, 15, 4, 10, 14. Even so *South Wind* was begun at the present sixteenth chapter and carried to

the conclusion, then continued from the first to the fifteenth. To begin writing a novel at the beginning and end at the end does not strike me as a sound plan. The characters are apt to run away with you ; one is also liable, they tell me, to " get stuck ", a state of affairs which is unintelligible to me.

I thought it strange that the reviewers of this book should not have recognized its affinity with Lalo's *Roi d'Ys* or Peacock's *Misfortunes of Elphin*. Generally speaking they are quite well informed on such points, albeit a good many of them suffer from inadequate equipment of another kind. Their vision is not wide enough, their human sympathy too shallow. Let me explain my meaning. To judge of a man's writing on its literary merits is one part of the critic's business and one part only, seeing that a book is both a mental product and a social one. A knowledge of the British Museum Library will never suffice to make a respectable reviewer. He must have a knowledge of life, of men and their ways ; a fair dose of personal worldly experience. This is what they sometimes lack, and it accounts for a certain thinness, a certain anaemic quality, in their appraisals. \*

Altogether, a little more warmth in both directions would not be amiss. One thinks of the tepid notices which greeted works like Strachey's *Portraits in Miniature* : it called for the heartiest praise. One thinks of the tepid notices greeting some of to-day's printed abortions which Anatole France would have classed as " hors de la littérature " : they call for the heartiest abuse. And then—is it justifiable to approach all the writers from one and the same angle, with an unchanging set of predetermined opinions ? Should a reviewer be what he sometimes is, a mentor with a fixed point of view ? Certainly he should, where mere questions of intellectual discipline, of good or bad writing, straight or crooked thinking, are involved.

There he stands on firm ground. Beyond this province the canons are variable, and he is the critic who discovers and applies the right one. Reviewers might also raise the art to a higher level by refusing to write for the half-civilized, by treating them as non-existent. That feat is hard to accomplish, as I know from experience at the *English Review*.

Ford Maddox Hueffer—whatever he may have called himself afterwards—made the reputation of that paper, though he was such an indifferent man of business that he would have ended in ruining it commercially. He had an infectious enthusiasm and flair for literature besides being a fluent writer and talker, and one who could lie most pleasantly. No doubt he thought a good deal of himself, as do many others and with less reason. Later on, in Paris, he grew so fat and Buddhistic and nasal that a dear friend described him as an animated adenoid. Adenoid or no, he remained good company. When he married Violet Hunt I thought that lively person would go through his self-complacency like a needle. Not at all. He sat down on her like an octopus.

Then Austin Harrison stepped into his place and an American has taken the trouble to catalogue the articles and book-notices I produced under that distasteful regime, while omitting one or two, such as the review of a volume on Arabic music, a queer little treatise in a queer binding, which I am sorry to have sold. A few of these things are included here (pp.           ). I managed during this period to hit out now and then and say what I thought, while becoming more and more—how shall we say?—more and more venial as the months rolled by.

There was no help for it. Harrison, for instance, would come to me with a worried look on his face and say: "This is awful. My father's written a book. Yes, another book, and I daren't give it to any of our people to review

because they would simply cut it to pieces. Would you mind very much? I know you can't stand his theories, but you'll try to say something nice about it, won't you? It would make him ever so happy. And the poor old boy can't last much longer anyhow." Accordingly, instead of letting myself go, I was obliged to search for a few grains of common sense in the chaos of Frederic's positivistic balderdash. Or Sidney Colvin would write imploring me to be gentle with a young lady-friend who was sending us her first volume of poems for review. What could I do, having dined with him the week before? And over all hung the sword of Damocles (for a monthly should be run on a sound financial basis), the all-too-reasonable argument of the publishers, "If you flay our authors you won't get our ads."

Dirty work. And not over-paid.

## OLD CALABRIA

*Nine extracts (pp.       ).*

I first went to Calabria in 1907 and alone. Since those days I have been to the country many times partly alone and partly, on eight occasions, with friends English or Italian, my longest stay there being with Eric in 1911. The last visit was in 1936 when, as early as the 4th October, we were snowed up in the forest region at the chapel of the Madonna di Pollino. I have never been there in the winter season.

This is what I should call a full-bodied book. It was published in 1915. The writing occupied me for a good number of years and some of the chapters, such as those on Dragons and on African Intruders, on Milton, on Southern Saintliness and on Pythagoras, called for a certain amount of research and thinking.

I am more than ever convinced that my explanation of the dragon-myth, for all its seeming strangeness, is the

correct one. Or will somebody formulate an alternative theory which covers all the ground as mine does? In McDonald's Bibliography I gave some supplementary facts to which might be added that a dragon guarded the fountain of Dirce at Thebes, that the child of Lycurgus of Nemea was killed by a fountain-dragon, and other tales of this kind that have sprung up in various parts of the world. This chapter should be read slowly, if read at all, and I think it would be an improvement if it had opened with the last paragraph of the previous one. As to Pythagoras—one might note what Diogenes Laertius (VIII, 9) tells us about his asceticism and hatred of normal sexual life. It fits in with the rest of his spiritual equipment.

A great part of *Old Calabria* was written during that spell of acute financial depression which preceded my appointment as Assistant Editor of the *English Review*; whereafter my affairs began to straighten themselves out again. Strange places one used to inhabit—in the King's Cross district, near St. Giles', in Chiswick Lane, at Richmond, or in the back room at 298 Kew Road. I happen to remember that it was there, in Kew Road, that I wrote the chapter entitled "A Mountain Festival" and also remember wondering, as I wrote and looked out of my window—even as I am doing at this very moment—whether I should ever contrive to see that festival again. In those days I succeeded. What about now?

Portions of the book have appeared as articles in English and American periodicals, and the chapter about the "Angel of Manfredonia" was published as a booklet by the Windsor Press of San Francisco. It astonished me, seven years before the book appeared, that I could not persuade any English Editor to accept the chapter on Milton, which records what is surely an important discovery in the domain of English letters. Perhaps it was too important for them; perhaps they were horrified to find themselves face to face with the



proof that *Paradise Lost* was a plagiarism, a "transfusion in general and in particular", of a contemporary and hitherto undiscovered Italian source; perhaps—who knows?—they thought the article was a complicated hoax on my part. The *Atlantic Monthly* came to my rescue and printed it in November, 1908.

Since that time another, and the only known other, copy of Salandra's *Adamo Caduto* has come to light and found its way, *via* the American Embassy in Rome, into the Library of Harvard College. I have mentioned this fact on pages 56-57 of *Looking Back*, a book which contains some further notes on Calabria scattered about the text. An entertaining account of a recent visit to that country will be found in Orioli's *Moving Along*.

During those last trips I gathered some fresh details on the subject of road-building, folklore, the anti-malaria campaign, on Sibaris and the disappearance of local costumes and deforestation and such-like. The prospect of being unable to return to those scenes is so depressing that I am not in the mood for saying anything about them.

There are numerous misprints, such as *youth* for *south* and *sacred* for *scared*. A few have been corrected in two other publications; remaining ones can wait. It is now summer-time, and I ought to be in Calabria instead of talking about it.

Reviewers on the whole were favourable, some of them laudatory. One or two of the genteel variety seemed to be a little hurt at the materialistic tone of "Southern Saintliness". They would have liked me to take a more spiritual point of view in regard to these queer events, in other words, to allegorize facts instead of letting them speak for themselves. The spiritual interpretation of unpalatable facts is not to my taste, signifying, as it does, that an intelligent observation of them has been thrown out of gear. The delightful word "spiritual" is not to be trusted; on

occasion it allows "muddle-headed" to step into its shoes. I used it in this sense just now when speaking of the aspirations of Pythagoras, that exemplary old muddler.

Another critic made a sage remark. In some copies we had reproduced Baedeker's excellent map of the country—reproduced it so badly that one could make nothing out of it. He wrote: "There are one or two good jokes in this book, and the best one is the author's map."

### EXPERIMENTS

Here are eight extracts (pp.                   ) from *Experiments*.

My privately printed edition of this book: that was in itself an experiment, a most trying one. It was my first serious attempt at this kind of thing and engulfed me in an ocean of troubles. Nobody at the printer's place knew a word of English, with the consequence that the proof-reading of so much matter drove me nearly to despair. Then the size of the book—I wanted octavo, he insisted on the unwieldy quarto; trouble about the flimsy paper which he vowed was hand-made (and so it may be); trouble with binders, trouble with the packing of copies and the keeping of correct accounts with buyers who had paid for theirs, with those who had not, with others who would not, necessitating a vast *dossier* of addresses and correspondence—all to be done single-handed, save that whenever a sufficient pile of parcels had accumulated, I would call for a small boy who hired a wheel-barrow in which the consignment was trundled to the post office and sent off, an operation which never took less than an hour to perform, seeing that every one of them had to be registered.

One lives and learns. By the time of my third venture in this line I had become an expert. And it was quite a lucrative business, in spite of some debts which have remained unpaid to this day and were contracted, of course, by rich clients; the poor and medium rich always

paying in full. All too soon the fall of the pound sterling made the manufacture of such books in Italy rather hazardous from a financial point of view.

Indeed, if it were twenty years ago, I should have given this advice to any writer of my particular calibre: print your book in a small signed edition handsomely and expensively (I charged three guineas for *Experiments* and it was quickly sold out; a copy was catalogued not long ago at sixty dollars); then, when this edition is exhausted or begins to show signs of falling off, sell it outright to your publisher for whatever you can get. I have made a calculation proving that if I had continued with the old royalty system my income from books would be less than half of what it actually is. One begins to understand cases like that of W. H. Hudson and other respectable writers who lived and died in relative poverty. I should never give such advice, however, to a really popular author (private editions are not worth his while) nor to a writer of any kind at the present moment, when the craze for these expensive books has subsided.

The American edition of *Experiments* is the best. It contains the Dedication, Book-reviews, and the Magnus pamphlet, one or the other of which is missing elsewhere. There is new and valuable material in this version of *D. H. Lawrence and Maurice Magnus*. The original issue appeared a year before *Experiments* in 1924, and gave no trouble. This was a little thing, easily packed and posted, never registered, and despatched only on receipt of five shillings or its American equivalent. After being discreetly advertised by myself it went off well. The third edition was stereotyped and cannot therefore be mistaken for the other two although, to humour certain readers, the original date 1924 and some of the original misprints of the first were re-instated. . . .

One is reluctant to warm up a cold broth, but in a recent

American publication likely to appear soon, we are told, on this side of the Atlantic, there are a few statements about that Magnus business which call for correction, if I am not to remain misrepresented in the eyes of its readers. I hope it will not sound egotistical when I say :

1. No. The playful caricature of myself in Lawrence's *Aaron's Rod* is not the reason why I took up arms against him. The reason was that he had distorted the character of Maurice Magnus, a dead friend of mine whose memory I wished to defend. *Aaron's Rod* was ancient history by that time ; besides I am far too tough to care tuppence what anybody thinks or says or writes about me. To Hell with them !

2. I am accused of not helping Magnus in his distress. Nobody likes to be held up to posterity as one who deserts his friends in their hour of need, and this suggestion would be offensive were it not contradicted by the author himself who in another place (*Esquire*, December, 1941) speaks of " Douglas' loyalty and generosity to old friends ". I cannot reconcile these two aspects of my nature ; which of them shall go by the board ? Or did I single out for ill-treatment one of the oldest and best of friends, after helping him financially when he was still a stranger to myself and even his name unknown ?

3. " It is no credit to Norman<sup>r</sup> that he accepted a gift of £100 to write the pamphlet, from a rich woman who had a grudge against Lawrence." Will the lady please step forward, or can any one else divulge the origin of this legend ? It was myself who bore the grudge against Lawrence for his ignoble travesty of Magnus : hence my *Plea for Better Manners*. There may well have been ladies in the same case, indeed there must have been, and more than one of them, since they have lately published their personal comments on his cat-like disposition. My own biliary secretion was amply sufficient for that particular essay,

though a hundred pounds might go a little way towards the production of a second one.

4. "Norman had the crust to abuse Lawrence for not being a gentleman." Of course he was not a gentleman. Now let us tell the truth, which is this : friendly confidences were out of the question with Lawrence ; nothing was sacred ; all was grist to his literary mill. He was one of those mortals to whom one must never show kindness unless one wants to be stabbed in the back afterwards. I have given an example of this in *Looking Back*, and here is one of several more. The Compton Mackenzies had imprudently gone out of their way to make Lawrence happy and comfortable in Capri. They were rewarded in due course by the publication of two short stories about themselves and their household, both scurrilous and one of them libellous into the bargain. *C'était plus fort que lui* ; that is all one can say. Writes the man who knew him as well as anybody : "as a friend he was so incalculable and often so disappointing, so disheartening, that now and then I wonder how many of those who knew him well were really sorry when he died."

For the rest, Lawrence and his idiosyncracies would not be worth powder and shot if they were an isolated case. They are not an isolated case ; they are symptomatic. We have a brood of such people, and broader issues are involved—social issues. What are we to think of this school of evil-speaking, this vilification of men and women from whom one has accepted benefits ? Nothing ; save that it would be considered bad form in a community of scullery-maids and stable-boys.

### THREE OF THEM

*Five extracts (pp.           ).*

There is an interval of thirty-eight years between the first and the last of these three pieces. I forget whether *One*

*Day* appeared anywhere before Nancy Cunard's sumptuous Edition (Hours Press, 1929) with a picture of myself seated at the Temple of Bassae. The copies should become rather valuable, for all her remaining stock of the book is at Réanville in German hands; can it ever come to the surface again? An American Review called *Travel* printed *One Day* (November, 1929) under the title "Farewell to Athens", and there is a French translation (Echanges, Paris, June, 1930).

This little book had an odd genesis. Early in 1920 a suggestion reached Mr. Venizelos, then Prime Minister of Greece, that a volume dealing with his country in the manner of my *Old Calabria* would be an attractive addition to its travel literature and that I was the proper person to write it. The result of this suggestion? Venizelos was delighted. And what would I be pleased to accept by way of remuneration? Three hundred pounds. Done! Government money, of course.

The Greek Minister in Rome was instructed to hand me this sum together with certain letters of recommendation and travel-facilities; which he did. This old gentleman, by the way, astonished me not only by his remarkably handsome presence, but by his local knowledge. I happened to mention the respectable but quite obscure street in which I was staying. To my surprise he knew it, and the shortest way to reach it from his Legation would be by following, etc., etc. "It's a little hobby of mine," he said. "Try me with some more of them." I gave the names of two or three sombre alleys in the Trastevere region which I frequented in days of old. He placed them all correctly—an unusual accomplishment, even for a native.

Arrived at Athens, I first found quarters at the British School where I had been an occasional visitor in 1892, as recorded in *Looking Back*. The fare just then left something to be desired, but the library . . . that library! Here was

Greece from many angles ; Greece, I soon realized, from too many angles. I was appalled at the task before me. Would I ever be able to assimilate all this material and fashion it into a readable book, seeing that *Old Calabria* had taken several years to write and many months of weary research ? Then the language which I had chattered to my satisfaction in 1892 and which was now necessary for travelling about the country—the language : where had it gone ? Gone the way of Russian which I spoke and wrote fluently in 1896 and had meanwhile clean forgotten (if only one could forget certain other things as easily ! ) A teacher was engaged, and after a course of six or eight lessons it was apparent that I was too old to learn, too old or too stupid—or both.

I had made a miscalculation ; the Greeks were never to have their *Old Hellas* or whatever it might have been called. They got *One Day*, and at quite a reasonable price, if cold statistics can prove anything. Let me see : there are about twelve million Greeks on the mainland and islands, or domiciled in Egypt, America, and elsewhere. Three quarters of them are tax-payers of one kind or another. Nine million men have therefore contributed the fraction of a farthing each (if my arithmetic is not at fault) towards the production of a book not imposing perhaps as to bulk, but crammed with shrewd and suggestive observations, exalting a candid love of their race and fatherland and a reverence for its traditions ; a book written by a countryman of their national hero Byron and in a style, moreover, which no critic will call displeasing : all this for the fraction of a farthing ! Not a bad bargain, from the Greek point of view. And so much for the genesis of *One Day*.

Glancing once more through these pages I find there is a mistake on p. 32 where I speak of Hymettus as being timbered in the days of Sophocles. It is described as treeless in the *Critias* of Plato who hints, however, at the

former existence of woodlands on this hill. Page 28, line 13 from bottom, *for* aloud *read* loud.

About *Nerinda* there is nothing to say beyond what is already printed in the "Author's Note", part of which is reproduced here on p. . It was first published in *Unprofessional Tales*, then by Orioli of Florence, then by some American firm whose name I forget. Misprint: p. 119, line 14 from top, *for* not *read* but.

The *Herpetology, etc.*, written in 1891, takes one back—back into a Germany different from that of to-day. There in only one extract here (p. ), on the Alpine newt; I should have preferred the description of *Rana arvalis*, an interesting beast, but it is too long.

The reader may be relieved to learn that certain other biological papers are not at hand, else he might have been favoured with something about the Theory of Sexual Selection, or the Distribution of the Beaver in Norway. Why bother about the Beaver in Norway?

Why not? Knowledge is power, they say. Knowledge is not only power; it is good fun.

## SOUTH WIND

*Eight extracts (pp. ).*

The last edition of this book appeared in 1942 and contains at least twenty-five misprints, some of them sufficiently annoying—this, in spite of all the trouble taken by the publisher and myself to avoid such things.

The short Introductory Note I wrote for it led to some correspondence; firstly, with Hughes Massie and Co., my agents. I find I was wrong in saying that an omission on Mr. Massie's part was the reason why this book was not copyrighted in the United States. It appears that Mr. Massie did his utmost to induce American publishers to take up the book, but failed; and that is why it could not be copyrighted. I owe them an apology for this. I will correct



the error—together with the misprints, if possible—in the next edition of the book, and in mentioning it here I am taking the earliest opportunity of rectifying matters.

Secondly, there was an interchange of letters with Mr. Bennett Cerf of the New York *Modern Library* series which is printed in *The Bookseller* of 29th April last. From his long letter one thing is clear. On its thirty-sixth line we are told that the Modern Library "agreed to pay Norman Douglas a courtesy royalty of 5 cents a copy on the Modern Library edition of *South Wind*". Another thing is also clear. The statement goes on to say "When Mr. Klopfer and I took over the Modern Library in 1925 we continued to pay Mr. Douglas this 5 cents a copy till July 1st, 1932." As I have received nothing since then I should like to ask Mr. Cerf again: When is he going to pay me the eleven years' royalties which on his own showing he still owes me? If the figures he gives are correct, these should amount to about three thousand three hundred dollars. When?

The mention of America reminds me that a correspondent out there, unknown to myself, sent me an Index he had prepared for *South Wind*, an astonishing document. Another gentleman, also unknown to me, drew up an imaginary map of Nepenthe marking every spot named in the text. It was an ingenious piece of work, and I wish I had these two things here. They are in enemy hands together with my other worldly possessions—yes, all of them, old and new, great and small—and who knows whether I shall ever see them again? Or my friends of long standing? A disheartening state of affairs. . . .

I sometimes wonder how many copies of this book I have signed for friends and others. For I do not share the prejudice of some writers against this practice which gives pleasure to the recipient and does me no harm, although one is sometimes taken aback at finding these "autograph

copies" in the catalogues of second-hand booksellers. In such cases, if you like, you may profit by the opportunity of buying back your own book at five times its original price, thanks to the autograph; and then sit down to meditate upon the fruits of misplaced civility.

And how many letters have I received from kind folk who took a fancy to *South Wind*? I am more than grateful for such encouragement and almost tempted to add, meekly, and as it were *sotto voce*, that there are methods other than verbal of proving to a writer that you appreciate his work; methods which, alas, have never been employed in my case; methods of which every author will approve; methods, in short, which deserve to be widely adopted on the part of well-disposed readers. For instance, how would this be:

Dear Norman Douglas,

I had a stroke of luck this morning. I hooked and landed an 18 pounder, and then found I simply could not resist the temptation of sending him straight on to you. Why? Because I have been reading your *Playing with Fire* for the fiftieth time and like it better than ever. Surely that is an adequate reason?

He should reach you some time to-morrow. As you said you were changing your address I am sending him c/o your publisher, and will you please see that he does not get away with the parcel on the pretext of your being out of town?

I hope you will like the fish. He is fresh run, and this is more than can be said of

Yours always gratefully,

.....

Or this:

Dear Sir,

I am in the City and so busy that I have hardly ever time to look at anything except the papers. But last week-end a friend insisted on my reading your *Pauline in Pyjamas*, and I must confess I have seldom enjoyed anything so much. It did me good.

I daresay there are plenty of people sending letters to thank you for

what you have written. Well, that is not my notion of being even with a man who has given me amusement on your lines. Would you take it very much amiss, I wonder, if I begged you to accept the enclosed cheque for £100? I hope not, because then I should have the satisfaction and delight of thinking that I had contributed towards paying for a drink or two, which you so richly deserve. And please don't trouble to thank me. I don't collect autographs, much as I look forward to the pleasure of meeting you personally one of these days, and the sooner the better so far as I am concerned.

Yours sincerely,

. . . . .

Or this :

Dear D.,

This is the limit. Last night I shrieked myself hoarse with laughing over your last story about the Armadillo and the Cardinal's niece. What must she have thought. And the Armadillo, pensive and resigned. Now what I say is this. A fellow who can make you laugh so much deserves something for his trouble. And let me tell you I've just thought of something. You know uncle Fred left me his place at Hampstead including that priceless "Library". I've been selling the muck to Snaggs as fast as I can by the cartload. But there's one batch he won't touch. Seven shelves of erotica or whatever you call it. I've looked at some of the drawings. Good God. No wonder he won't touch them. They take some beating. But just your style. The old dodderer used to swear that he spent a life-time over the collection and it was worth anything over two thousand. I ought to warn you that he was a bit of a liar. If he wasn't, so much the better for you. Because the whole lot goes to you by Carter Paterson this afternoon. About a ton of books, I should say. You will want to fix them up in your studio. If you do, no decent man or woman will care to be seen there. That doesn't matter in the least. They don't care to be seen there anyway, do they?

Yours ever,

. . . . .

Or this :

Dear Sir,

We have pleasure in informing you that a client of this firm lately deceased has bequeathed to you the sum of five thousand pounds in recognition of your services to English literature and on the condition that his name is not to be made known to you.

We are holding this sum at your disposal and shall be pleased to learn your wishes in the matter.

We are, etc.,

.....

These are the letters which authors ought to receive—and never do.

## LOOKING BACK

*Seventeen extracts (pp.       ).*

The idea of casting an autobiography into this form seems to me a good one. The images vary continuously, whereas certain other books of this kind, however full of interesting information, are apt to be heavy; the matter may be valuable, the manner is tiresome.

Not all the illustrations I sent in were reproduced and this, to my way of thinking, was a mistake. (One or two pictures of myself might well have been omitted). The small additional expense involved would surely have been more than counterbalanced by their worth to the reader, and I feel so strongly on this point that here is a list of them. Frontispiece: Oriental *brûle-parfum*; to face page 107: Lebanon cedars viewed from the Col; p. 141: Crater of Vulcano (from Spallanzani); p. 148: The Weaste, Manchester; p. 238: photo of Helen and Aurore taken together at Petersburg; p. 373: Pilaster of *rosso antico*; p. 381: striped salamander; p. 458: Count Campo Alegre; p. 506: Professor Leydig. Whoever cares to take the trouble will find these additional illustrations in a British Museum copy of this book, the receipt of which has been acknowledged by the authorities.

If I am over-conscientious in some matters, that is a fault in the right direction. Anyhow, and apart from a few misprints which are not worth mentioning, I should like to correct or amplify one or two statements, as I may never again have an opportunity of doing so.

P. 75. Uchtomsky. *Oukhtomsky (Prince E. E.) Voyage en Orient : Grèce, Egypte, Inde, 1890-91, 178 illusts., imp. 4to., Paris, 1893.* Note the year of publication. This must be the man. My report was written in 1894.

P. 201. Graeff. See Frazer's *Pausanias*, vol. II, pp. 98, 99.

P. 256. de Sade. Generally known as Marquis though I believe he was also a Count. It is a pity we possess not a single portrait of him. Long years of imprisonment, depriving him of that social life and feminine companionship for which his over-sexed and imaginative nature was craving, may have helped to develop "sadistic" tendencies, and forced him to convert the licentious acts of his youth into words.

P. 289. Massy-Mainwaring. Wrong. He did not present the museum to the nation, although he presented many things to the museum.

P. 311. Rolfe. Wrong. He lived in the open boat but died on shore.

P. 337. Cunard. Wrong. Her book is called not *Colour* but *Negro*, a monstrous and most informative tome, to which I contributed a short letter.

P. 433. Turanian stock. Can this term be applied to the Far East as I intended? "Those glorious blossoms that trail up the trees yonder and writhe about their branches, scattering here and there in a shower of purple blossoms—you see them? I carried the young plant on my own back, together with many others, out of the far-away land of the Colocynthians" (*In the Beginning*, p. 53). This is the Wistaria, a Chinese plant. And p. 18 of the same book: "He found it rich sport to see these superior people scuttling out of their pink towers and crawling for refuge into tufts of feather-cane whose matted roots, on such occasions, shivered and swayed like wood on stormy water, but never cracked." This refers to the Japanese

custom of jumping into bamboo thickets during earthquakes.

P. 481. Tam Edward (*not* Edwards). Wrong. He was born at some place like Portsmouth, according to Smiles, who has given the text of his speech at Yarlet, which he wrongly describes as being near Liverpool....

This book ran smoothly off my pen; I hope it reads smoothly. Yet it must have drained my mentality up to a point, since for the following ten years I was able to write nothing—not a line save a short Introduction to a cheap American Edition of *Old Calabria*, and that only because I could then make it a condition that the publisher should reproduce the Index of the English Edition on which I had set my heart, and which had been omitted from an earlier cheap American reprint.

For ten long years I felt as if I had written myself out, which did not prevent me from being assailed by the persistent and annoying question "Why aren't you writing another book?" Why don't you write something: these words have given me food for thought, and I will proceed to reveal the upshot of that thinking for the benefit of fellow-sufferers.

It is obvious that persons who ask such a question can never have written what I call a book, else they would not ask it. They think, no doubt, that writing books is an occupation like planting potatoes, an occupation which you can lay down and take up again at your pleasure. And I daresay the labour or trouble involved in the two tasks is the same. There may be no difference in degree. There is a difference in kind of which these good folk seem to be unaware, and a more appropriate simile—an amazingly close parallel, indeed—has often occurred to me, namely, the analogy which can be drawn between literary production and bodily evacuation.

Will the reader, instead of being shocked, kindly note

the significant fact that both processes conform to these rules (1) when you possess the material you may give, and (2) you cannot give what you do not possess. Offer the poorest man the wealth of Cræsus to relieve his bowels then and there, and he will reply with a sad smile: "Alas, you have caught me in a bad moment. There is nothing at hand in that department of my body. Have a little patience, and then we'll see." Says the author rich or poor: "A thousand apologies! There is nothing available in my brain just now. Have a little patience, and then we'll see." I am expressing myself in the politest language at my command.

Let us ask whether this strikingly sound allegory allows itself to be pursued further. It will hold good, at least, to this extent that any doctor, and even common sense or your own physical comfort, will tell you that the excretory act should not be interrupted once begun. Even so a book, once begun, should be carried on to its end bitter or sweet. Then and then only will you be able to rise to your feet with the satisfactory feeling that you have cast off something in due season, in full measure, and to good purpose.

Curious to observe that the analogy, once you begin to squeeze it, does not behave in the manner of an orange which runs dry on pressure. It yields fresh juice after this fashion: a wise man will wait for the second peristaltic movement, for that final muscular contraction which ensures that everything voidable has been voided for the time being. Should he fail to do so, his health may suffer. And the wise author, after the main load of thought has been discharged, will interpose a spell of concentrated intellectual effort during which he gathers together the remaining loose ends of his material before consigning it definitely to its destination, the public. Should he fail to do so, the book may suffer.

Lastly, and to round off the parable, we have that

distressing phenomenon of laxity or diarrhoea, the case of those unhappy mortals, writers or non-writers, who cover reams of paper with their respective waste products cerebral and organic—the one as worthless as the other. An all-too prevalent complaint ! One knows the virtue of astringent drugs like bismuth and wonders whether a few doses, taken metaphorically, would do any harm to some of our present-day authors.

### PANEROS

Here are eight extracts (pp.           ) from Paneros, a word which should be pronounced Panerôs, even as that delicious Eôthen of Kinglake's is accented not on the first but on the second syllable.

It had a singular origin, this book. A friend collected for publication from his own stock and from mine and from that of others some two hundred culinary recipes of an aphrodisiacal nature. The projected work was called "Venus in the Kitchen", and D. H. Lawrence painted for it a frontispiece depicting an obese, middle-aged woman shovelling something into a kitchen-oven with a small boy or devil (I forget which) at her side—a monstrously anti-aphrodisiac vision, but pure Lawrence. The author of the book was Pilaff Bey.

Pilaff Bey ; that was myself. I wrote what I thought was an appetizing Preface with oriental flavour and the thing was ready for the press but never printed, owing to certain financial risks involved. The typescript is now inaccessible, in Italy. If I could at least have my Preface back, it would make a passable addition to these pages.

Well, that started me on the subject, and with my usual "Bookishness" (*Manchester Guardian* of long ago ; and not far wrong !) I delved into all the authorities available, beginning with the classical and our own earlier ones. Queer names some of these people have—Helmontius,



Varignana, Weckerus, Lemnius, Pisanellus, Gattinaria and so on. Queer ; but authentic in spite of what a friend reports himself as saying to me in one of his books : " My dear boy, before you go any further, let me explain what you are going to do. You are going to tell me about one of your imaginary authors ; you have invented that man, as you invented a good many others whom you quote in your books. I quite realise that this system gives your writings a fine veneer of scholarship, but, believe me, you'll be found out one of these days."

Whether the antiquated style of Paneros will give as much pleasure to any reader as it gave trouble to me, who can say ? If yes, then his pleasure will have to be considerable.

p. 66. " That most terrestrial of our English mystics " : William Blake, who was the reverse of a mystic in many respects.

p. 85. The words in italics *our only reality* are from Godwin's Essay on Sepluchres.

p. 88. King Mausolus a show for hyperboreans. The statuary in the British Museum.

p. 85. " Give love to the young " : here begins the coda, opening up another and more spacious vista. I had in mind the amplitude, the humanity, of the concluding pages in the *Hydriotaphia*. To close upon a new note as a kind of afterthought, to broaden out or contrive some stimulating and unexpected elaboration of what went before—that is a literary device as old as the hills ; as old, at least, as Plato who made adroit use of it at the tail-end of his *Symposium*. And lovers of Beethoven will recall many instances of his fondness for kindling a fresh spark at the last moment.

Previous to the present edition, there was another privately printed in Florence in the Lungarno Edition. I cannot remember the date or the number of copies, but

the edition was sold, and sold out, at the outrageous price of three guineas a copy. An American edition also exists (McBride).

Note to page 55. Middleton's "battered crab" may have been the crab-apple. I have not the reference here, and forget the context.

## SIREN LAND

*Thirteen extracts (pp.           ).*

My acquaintance with this stretch of country dates from the end of last and the beginning of this century; for example, the material of the sixth chapter, one of my favourites, was garnered about the year 1902. The present volume opens with an extract from that chapter.

The book itself was begun in May, 1908—"thence, for a little light refreshment, to Nerano; thence to that ill-famed 'House of the Spirits' where my *Siren Land* was begun in the company of one who feared no spirits—victim, already, of this cursed War, but then a laughter-loving child. . . ." Thus I wrote in *Alone*.

The village of Nerano lies near the tail-end of the Sorrentine peninsula, facing South and on the middle heights. If you walk westwards from there under the cliffs of Mount San Costanzo you will presently notice on your left hand a porch which gives access to this still invisible house; a little further on you may look down upon its roof. It stands alone, embowered in olives. At the time of my arrival it was in possession of a malignant spirit known as the *munaciello*, and in consequence of his antics had lain empty and abandoned for years. Maybe the intruder has now been ousted—did my presence in the place contribute to this result?—for I observe that its original saffron colour has turned to pink, which suggests a tenant of some kind.

The small but efficient peasant-boy who in 1908 feared no ghosts was an authentic product of the soil from Termini,

a neighbouring village. He bore the historical name of Amitrano peculiar to these regions, and in another chapter of *Siren Land* I have gone into the derivation of this name and spoken of some former exploits of his clan, now reduced to humble condition. It was not long before he revealed himself as an inexhaustible mine of that lore with which every nook of the district is saturated. *Siren Land* owes much to him, and so does the eighth chapter of *Old Calabria*.

For setting on foot a modest work of this variety what more propitious spot could have been chosen than my retreat among those exquisite surroundings? No friends, no neighbours; olives on every side and the sea far below, with views upon the Siren Islets, the distant mountains of Lucania and the Amalfitan coastline; the smile of that devoted little fellow who would wake me in the mornings with a fresh bouquet of vanilla-scented orchids gathered along the pathway overhead? I must have found myself in responsive mood to the promptings of the *genius loci* when I wrote in the second chapter of *Siren Land*:

“Here, on these odorous Siren heights, far removed from duty’s sacred call—for duty has become the Moloch of modern life—it may not be amiss to build a summer hut wherein to undergo a brief period of *katharsis*, of purgation and re-adjustment. For we do get sadly out of perspective with our environment in the fevered North, out of touch with elemental and permanent things; we are for ever looking up-stream. . . . To dream in Siren Land, pursuing the moods and memories as they shift in labyrinthine mazes, like shadows on a woodland path in June; to stroll among the hills and fill the mind with new images upon which to browse at leisure, casting off outworn weeds of thought with the painless ease of a serpent and unperplexing, incidentally, some of those “questions of the day” of which the daily papers nevertheless know nothing—this is

an antidote for many ills. There is repose in Siren Land ; there is none of that delirious massing-together in which certain mortals, unable to stand alone, can lean up against one another and so gain, for a moment, a precarious condition of equipoise."

I commenced the book with the passage about the goat-caves, here reproduced on p. —and no wonder, since those caves are quite near at hand. Other walks in the neighbourhood led to Ierate, the " three-peaked rock " of the old geographer Eratosthenes to which I have consecrated several pages of *Alone* and which was then a wilderness of aromatic *maquis* with a crumbling Martello-tower, as lonely a spot as you might wish to find on earth. Nearly every evening we found our way to the deserted beach of Recomone, for bathing and supper. Or else we would wander further afield, up to the sub-alpine woodlands and pastures of Faito, which prompted the reflections here recorded on page , and into every other corner, no matter how remote or difficult of approach, of this favoured territory (and, later on, still further afield).

For months I was alone with this friendly child, learning what is not to be learned out of books and " casting off outworn weeds of thought with the painless ease of a serpent " ; it was a cleansing interlude, one of those moments in life which must have left their mark, for even nowadays, after all these years and all their troubles, I never pass along the familiar tracks without a certain little heartache. Here, and during this period, were sown the seeds of *South Wind*.

The young Amitrano gave a good account of himself afterwards, and came to me as cook when I was finishing *South Wind* at the Villa Behring on Capri in 1916. Then he was drafted into the army and died later at home after long suffering, the result of the War. A month before leaving Italy in 1937 I looked up his widow and the child. They

were doing fairly well. They would have been doing better, if he were still alive. . . .

The first edition of *Siren Land* was published in 1911. Its original manuscript consisted of twenty chapters ; seven were cut out by the publisher as being " too remote from human interests " and some of this discarded material subsequently found a refuge in *Old Calabria*. From the final settlement of account (30 June, 1919) I learned that 890 copies had been " wasted ", in other words pulped—and pulped without my being consulted in the matter. All the satisfaction I got out of him was this : " We regret to find that we did not advise you at the time when we destroyed the sheets. In the ordinary course we should have done so, and we can not understand how we omitted to write to you. " Small consolation. One would have liked to buy a few copies to give away.

The book contains some misstatements I should like to correct such as where, on page 100 of the new edition, I credit Addison (1705) with being the first to apply the term " romantic " to natural scenery whereas the priority belongs to John Evelyn in 1654 ; or where on page 161 I speak of a blue thistle which is no thistle at all ; and one or two other slips. The word *solstitial*, on p. 151, should be replaced by *midsummer*.

A new and revised edition by another publisher appeared in 1923, and I have elsewhere noted some of the wondrous misprints it contains, while omitting to mention about a dozen more of them. Here is an important one : page 289, third line from top, *for* different *read* indifferent, and page 308, line 18 from top, *for* wild *read* mild.

Now it struck me that a book of this kind requires an index of subjects and proper names. I suggested writing one, *con amore*, for the sum of five pounds, and on the lines of that drawn up for *Old Calabria*, a month's work which any expert will pronounce to be a businesslike and creditable

performance. The offer was turned down. An index, none the less, was perpetrated by some hack and among its items I remember noticing "Phryne, an artist". Well, she was obviously an artist in one sense of the word. (Some mistake here. The item does not occur in the copy before me.)

Worse still was the omission of that convenient sketch-map in the first edition on which is marked every place mentioned in the text, and none that are not mentioned. The reproduction of this map, so useful for the reader's guidance, would have cost perhaps a farthing per copy. Truly, some publishers are like God—they move in a mysterious way.

According to McDonald's Bibliography, there are three American editions, based on sheets imported from England. I have seen none of these productions nor, to the best of my recollection, have I yet received one cent from any of the publishers concerned.

## LONDON STREET GAMES

*Seven extracts (pp.       ).*

I can think of little to say about these Games—little that is not contained in the Introduction which is reproduced on p.     . The Conclusion is also here (p.     ) as well as more extracts than the size of the book would seem to warrant. That is because the subject has not only a local but a permanently antiquarian interest. The rising generation of children has never heard of many of these games. If you doubt this, go to the East End as I have done, and ask them !

Some correspondents wrote to correct me, as they thought, about the boys' games or the girls' songs. "That's not the way it goes" or "that's not how we used to sing it" they would suggest, and then proceed to give me their own versions. Both of us are right. Variants are inevitable,

given the size of London and the fact that the songs and game rules are never written down or standardized.

A writer in some Scottish paper signing himself D.—I wish they had sent me the reference—records his own memories of Glasgow Street Games. His names for them differ from mine and he agrees with me about the decline of marbles (see p.     ) and the influence on children of the cinema and organized games. This is what he says :

“ I don’t know, but it sometimes seems to me that the child of to-day, instead of making his own amusements, prefers to sit in a stuffy cinema. This is having the effect of hastening the decline of our native Scottish games and vocabulary, and the hideous Americanisms of Hollywood are displacing the Doric everywhere.

“ And then, of course, there is the modern craze to ‘organize’ games. As if a game can be organized ; and as if a boy worth his salt wants to have an adult overseer.”

This is exactly what I said.

And an American correspondent sent me, in two batches, a noteworthy collection of New York Street Games. I begged him to have it printed somewhere....

These pages, for me, have a strangely rejuvenating virtue :

“ Children sit down in a ring and begin saying something about the cat such as Abomnerble Cat. Then B, such as Bloody Cat and so on.”

I am puzzled by the relative number of references to Spain. How account for them ? The ease with which one can find rimes to this word ? Or do they go back to the Peninsular War, to Elizabethan memories lingering by the water-side ? Possibly, since the oldest of these things, such as the touch games, date from days before Elizabeth was born ; primordial days ; days, doubtless, before we began to talk English or even to think of wearing clothes. They are survivals from a dim past. Touch games and their like must

have existed from time immemorial wherever two or three children with independent minds and healthy bodies could gather together.

I fear they are doomed. Progress under various disguises is draining away their life and will end in converting them into anachronisms or curiosities, tales for the erudite, much as the once friendly Dodo was wiped out by another pseudonym of that same Progress and is now a skeleton in a glass case.

And I can see some product of our future mechanized age, some horribly dehydrated apparition calling himself—herself, more likely—by the old-fashioned name of anthropologist, if this book should survive to fall into his hands, poring over its text as we might pore over the narrative of a traveller more inquisitive than the old Dutchman, a narrative describing from personal observation the habits and life-history of that strange fowl of Mauritius. “Street Games? An unsavoury crowd of imps,” he may reflect. “Hardly human. What can their parents have been about?”

Being a scholar, he will have learned that children of those days were not brought up by insemination and in hatcheries of one class or another, but by what were known as *parents*. “And that accounts for the mischief.”



## REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

### THE DESIRE FOR MARTYRDOM

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE. ARTHUR KOESTLER.

Cape. 7s. 6d.

I FIND IT hard to decide at what element of this novel its author would wish criticism to be directed—at its literary merit, which achieves Dostoievskian insight and stature: at its psychiatry, or at the self which inevitably reveals itself in semi-confessional writing. Earlier in the War I wrote that Koestler showed the clearest insight into the type of problem which confronts imaginative realism. He has preferred to confine his contemporary comment to reportage and quasi-reportage, a wise choice: in the present work he discusses one of the hardest problems for the contemporary writer: that blend of fact and fantasy in the mind of the refugee: that subject of Szobel's drawings. The hardest part of that problem is to differentiate the deliberate lies from the reality which unquestionably exists, in the face of a total absence of eyewitnesses or reliable evidence. Koestler dodges this very astutely over the Jewish massacres, by not differentiating fact from nightmare—the facts are, that hundreds are deported or killed, that Slavek was beaten up—the detail, with its erotic colour and its similarity to the corpse-factory stories, is a part not of history, but of the fear in the exile's mind. Until factual evidence is available, there is no other road for the sensitive writer. He must draw the confused mass that he sees even at the risk of misunderstanding. Koestler has done so brilliantly. From his own experience as a wanted man I would not have thought that he could do so.

His method of treatment is to permit the story of a political refugee to emerge slowly under classical Freudian psycho-analysis, and he intends to illustrate the relation

between Freudian origins and political activity—the quixotism and resistance of Slavek arise out of his projected resistance to his father. A hysterical pseudoparesis (dating from a burn inflicted by the police) is cured at an early stage of analysis, and the subject's feeling of guilt at having betrayed his comrades when in fact he acted with remarkable fortitude is identified with an accidentally realized death-wish against a baby brother. So far, so good—the most convincing feature of the whole thing is that the patient's superficial symptoms (an acute anxiety state, the hysterical palsy) are relieved by analysis, but his psychical dysharmony remains untouched. He enlists as a parachutist and returns to his vomit, after denying the sufficiency of the psychiatric diagnosis. In the end Koestler gives a wholly typical picture of the way in which many patients respond, or fail to respond, to analytical suggestion. The edifice built, he rejects it, brilliant as its construction has been. It is the Dostoievskian destruction of this edifice, ruthless and in itself rational, though it denies rationalism, which marks the highest level Koestler has yet attained. To the analyst, this is failure. Political attitudes cannot be discounted simply by showing their psychological origins. We are left in doubt.

It is hard to criticise the psychiatry of this book. Freud would probably have assented to most of it, and it has clearly been worked up with great zeal and care from Freudian literature. Inevitably it bears the stamp of most lay medical pictures, except those of Dickens, which were based on direct observation. It is rather too classical. The rickety child in a novel must have a big head and a small face *and* a pigeon chest *and* a pot belly *and* bumps on his ribs—he has been mugged up from textbooks, and his correct place is a “pot” in the R.C.S. museum. Least of all in psychiatry with its bewildering interplay of environmental and temperamental responses do classical cases

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presenting all the features of the Oedipus guilt-syndrome arise, and when they do, they fail to respond to suggestion with the ease and predictability of a machine. Koestler is on ground which is extremely dangerous to writers without clinical facts to support their imagination. But he succeeds.

For this reason one cannot attack the improbability of Slavek's simultaneous hysterical and confusional response. Here too there are places where Koestler, in applying his own method to a story of his own invention, leaves us in deliberate doubt. Take the incident which ends with the burning of Slavek—his leg is injured, his hysterical response is a limp. But Koestler's psychiatrist, and as far as we can judge *the patient himself consciously*, identify the police with the tyrannical father-figure. A psychiatrist confronted with the story as Koestler tells it could draw other conclusions. He would find himself obliged to consider (1) *whether the burns were really self-inflicted*, (2) whether in fact, confronted with a pantomimic representation of Slavek's castration complex, he should not consider the whole burning episode as a fantasy of self accusation arising out of Slavek's desire to castrate his own father. In my view the history does not fit the analytical results. It assumes a pure and unadulterated Freudianism which precious few practising psychiatrists would uphold. Deliberately, Koestler leaves the doubt.

One can carry this further. Nobody who writes at all widely in any field, and least of all in the field of psychiatry, can fail to reveal his own psychiatric makeup. It is in this revelation, which is unconscious, and not in the conscious attempt to analyse a puppet self Slavek, that the psycho-political interest of the book lies. If Koestler were ever to come up for classical analysis *himself* this book would be the first document which the analyst would wish to consider. The conception of Slavek, a projected self, the telling of the story, and the side which the narrator takes in the various incidents are all revealing. Koestler shares with

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many other writers—Giono in particular—a characteristic ambivalent attitude to suffering. His work is full of unconscious desmophilic and odynophilic fantasies. It is here that one finds the will-to-martyrdom in himself. When Slavek is being beaten up, he enjoys it—"a strange obscene ecstasy" (p. 103) the incident has unmistakable erotic colour—and his maltreatment is linked with auto-erotism (p. 107) whose purpose the author strangely fails to see. Still more illuminating is the breaking-up of the room in search of the kitten (p. 47) and the broken doll image on the previous page. Fascism, in the sense of politically organized violence, is, in my view, an attempt of the individual to orientate himself unconsciously to the reality of death, by cultivating callousness to himself and to others—a low estimate of life and life-value. The violence of Koestler-Slavek's reaction to the political aspect of fascism seems to me to be the passionate negation of unconscious sadomasochism in themselves. Koestler's brilliance in describing horrors compares very strikingly with his flatness elsewhere. And the recounting of horrors with a political purpose, as in Koestler's account of a Jewish massacre, does not act as simply on the reader as one would think. The first reaction is not one of immediate disapproval (witness the enormous popularity of torture in modern films) it is of immediate excitement, followed by a sense of guilt and self-reproach which is projected against the enemy. That is the reason why we can watch rape and murder committed by pirates, gangsters or nazis (public enemies) *with satisfaction*, while we should react equally violently against them if they were attributed to hero-figures with whom we identify ourselves. (*Next of Kin* was almost banned because an English soldier trod on a German's face in it.) It is vital that a propagandist interpreter of a violent age, that is, one who combines artistic integrity with political conviction, should understand this

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mechanism, and Koestler does understand it. But his book will be read for its violence and its readers will excuse their interest in terms of anti-fascism. One cannot psychoanalyse oneself, but Koestler very nearly succeeds in doing so. It is here that the achievement lies. The interplay of the real and the delusional Jerusalem, the burn which may have been self-inflicted, are done to perfection. This is how the evidence presents itself clinically, and, more to the point, it is a picture of the tangle of lies and reality in a deluded world.

If I have concentrated on the psychiatric claims of this book rather than its thesis or its technique, I have done so because they seem to be stressed by the author. I find his work nearest to full success when he is telling rather than commenting—witness the Jewish episode, which ranks as a short story (its original form, no doubt) comparable with “El Verdugo”. From the patient, one wants a history, not a diagnosis. And in this book, where patient and physician are one, some lack of insight is to my mind inevitable. But as an achievement the book is too outstanding to dismiss in these terms. My only doubt is whether when the agonized doubt and the agonized refugees are removed from everyday experience, it will not be relegated to the wrong category—the category of pseudo-factual atrocity—as Szobel’s drawings were relegated. This is an increasingly inauspicious age for sanity or integrity.

ALEX COMFORT

SAND IN THE GLASS. MICHAEL GARETH LLEWELYN.

John Murray. 12s. 6d.

THE FIRST THING that struck me about this autobiography was its author’s insensitivity to language. Often the Anglo-Welsh writer, partly perhaps because he is using a language to which he is never *quite* accustomed, is apt to scrutinize his words with great curiosity, to pull his





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phrases about a bit before using them, as a woman does a victimized hat. Mr. Llewelyn is not a writer who behaves so. I do not say this only because of his use of tricky words like "fatal" and "exotic", and because he can describe a minister as "a sheet-anchor to his flock", but because he is generally the sort of writer whose calls are "clarion", whose critics are "carping", whose inns are "hostelries", whose women belong to the "deadlier sex". Much of his writing is banal, obvious, adolescent. His book has many slips and clichés. If it were half as long it would be twice as good. And yet, in spite of everything, his narrative is interesting, informative, and valuable.

Mr. Llewelyn was fortunate enough to be born on the edge of the Glamorganshire coalfield, where Welsh was still the language of home and playground, and where customs such as *Mari Lwyd* and *Canu Calennig* were still observed. His father, a splendid example of Welsh peasant culture, was a working blacksmith, but he was also a poet and a learned antiquary who numbered among his correspondents such scholars and patriots as Sir John Rhys and Sir Owen M. Edwards. His mother, a woman of strong personality and intelligence, was the village schoolmistress and the family of seven children was nourished in an atmosphere of endeavour, learning, and endless discussion. With such ancestry and upbringing, it is no wonder Mr. Llewelyn writes as though his childhood and youth were times of fulfilment and happiness.

The primary job of an autobiographical writer is obviously to confront us with a convincing portrait of himself. What a pity so much of this book is given over to secondhand material and to chestnuts about Twm Shôn Catti and Yr Hen Blwy'. And what a pity this arrangement so often obscures the charming, eager, and idealistic personality which calls itself Michael Gareth Llewelyn.

GLYN JONES

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

under the Editorship of ROBERT HERRING

FEBRUARY

## INTRODUCTION

1944

I TOOK UP more pages than usual last month, and in March I hope to comment at some length on an essay by Henry Miller, which I shall then be printing. I have accordingly only allowed myself now one page, and as it is beyond me to enclose an Editorial within that space, I content myself with introducing this, and announcing the next, number.

Most of the authors in the following pages will be well known to our readers, but Major Clewes has hitherto appeared only as a writer of short stories, and Henry Treece has contributed poems. The one now sends a diary from Tunisia and the other the first chapter of his forthcoming autobiography. They thus appear in a light other than that in which they are usually seen, and the same may be said of the adaptation of Agnes Beaumont's diary, since John Bunyan is not usually connected, in the public mind, with murder trials. For March, the leading contribution will be a new long poem by Edith Sitwell. Prose will include an essay "Of Art and The Future" by Henry Miller, stories by Eudora Welty and a selection from articles by Enid Starkie, Gordon Bottomley, and Matila Ghyka.

The Colombian number, whose appearance depends upon translating, should be ready in any of the three months beginning with April.

## FROM A TUNISIAN DIARY

By HOWARD CLEWES

WE BURIED KIRK and Corporal Lane in the early evening of the day they were killed. It was extremely hot. They had been killed in the morning. All we found of Lane was his leg and a photograph of his wife. They had trodden on a Tellermine near Peter's Corner on the Tebourba Road.

The German graves, of which there were several in the graveyard, were booby-trapped to discourage the Arabs from digging them up for the clothes. The graveyard was in an olive grove. Over the cactus hedge surrounding it you could see the tips of the poplars lining the Medjez Road and the serene brown hills beyond. There was a slight hot breeze. The padre stood at the head of the graves on the newly-turned earth which was already dry. We stood round. Kirk lay in a blanket and Corporal Lane's leg was in a blanket whose four corners were tied together. The flies swarmed over them and the black beetles gathered round the blood that had soaked through the blankets and on the ropes under Kirk's head and legs. Some of the men of the company had come to the burial.

The padre whispered: "Better take their caps off, hadn't they?"

"Take your caps off," I said.

In England the padre had been inclined to plumpness. He used to buy himself bottles of fizzy lemonade and a quarter of caramels and sit in the mess on the sofa reading books by H. de Vere Stacpoole and eating the toffees and drinking the lemonade in the afternoons.

He began the service. The flies swarmed and the beetles gathered on the ground. A lizard slipped through the stones on the new grave beyond where we stood. The sun beat on our heads and on the white pages of the book in the padre's white hands. Sweat stood in big beads on his

brow and at last broke and ran down his face. There was a gap in the folds of the blanket over Lane's head; it looked the way a hood looks. The men watched the padre without any expression in their faces.

After a time he told the stretcher-bearers to put the first man into the grave, and the stretcher-bearers lifted the ropes under Lane, and the padre said, "Careful, careful," and they lowered the body into the shallow grave, letting it touch the edge so that the loose earth piled there ready fell in, and a cloud of dust rose and the flies rose buzzing angrily in the dust. The padre said they should be more careful, he had told them to be careful. Then he changed his weight from one foot to the other, and earth trickled over the edge down into the gap in the blankets where it was like a hood, with a slight sound. The stretcher-bearers drew out the ropes.

"Now the other."

They lowered the bundle into the little grave. There was no dust, but the flies came up in a black cloud. The padre said we would say the Lord's Prayer, and we said it and then there was a long silence, the men waiting for somebody to start going. The stretcher-bearers began shovelling the loose dry earth into the graves.

The padre whispered: "Better tell them to salute as, they go past. The graves I mean."

"Salute," I said.

They filed past, saluting.

Later in the campaign at Djebel bou Arada the padre was shot in the stomach bringing a wounded man out of a minefield under heavy machine-gun fire.

In the evening we walked down through the fields to the Mejerda at Baharine, where it was wide and shallow and the western bank threw a shadow over the quiet river almost to the other side where the scrub grew down to the sand. The banks were high and red with sandy tracks

running along the face of the cliff parallel with the water's edge, and trees crowded together in the shade. Under the trees we found a tortoise. On the eastern side there were no trees, only stiff dry scrub from which small animals came down to drink if you kept quiet.

We made the only sounds there were, though the guns rumbled not very far away : the noise sank easily into the back of your mind after a bit, and you would have said there wasn't a sound. In the warm brown water we felt the pull of the current against the arms when we leaned back sitting on the sandy bed facing upstream to the bend, maybe half a mile away, where the banks were quite sheer. We stayed in the water, lying in it in the middle of the river, for hours, not speaking. It was not very refreshing.

On the way back we saw green lizards among the stones. It was a long walk. By the time we saw the dome of the lonely mosque on the hill ahead of us we were sweating as much as when we had said, "Show me the river, just show me the water, that's all, that is all I want." When we got back to the farm we had to wash again, out of petrol tins.

We went to the Mejerda to bathe on several evenings, but it was always the same. After a while we stopped going.

The hills across the valley of the Mejerda were long and dark. There were trees in Smidia, but where we were there were no trees and no shade and nowhere to go out of the midday sun ; it lay across your back like something alive and heavy. Poppies and burrs grew here and there in the stiff dry stubble on the hillside, and there were scorpions under the big stones when we lifted them. The earth was hard and red, and the pickhelves blistered the hands while we dug the slits we always dug when we stopped. When the enemy began to mortar the hill we went to ground with every bomb, listening to the splinters whining over our

heads, but it was tiring continually getting up and down, and soon we only ducked, and finally took no notice at all, till somebody was hit. Then we began over again, getting down against the hot earth, and then only ducking, and at length ignoring the bombs again. Altogether three were hit.

The hill we were on was called Djebel bou Arara. We had marched up from Smidia in the morning, from the quiet farm at Hennchir Aloroubia where the three white dogs had been and the mule with the broken leg that we shot. We came across the railway into the sun, and down through the ripe corn to the river. The engineers had thrown several bridges across the Mejerda, and there was a good deal of traffic at all of them in the morning, for we were going forward. It was wonderful to go forward after so long. We had to wait at the side of the track leading down to the river where the dust was nearly a foot deep, like soiled flour, so that everybody's face was white and we were all grey-white from head to toe, every truck that passed us raising a blinding, choking, pall of dust that got into your teeth when you breathed and took twenty minutes to settle. There were men bathing in the smooth flowing thick brown water under the bridge, their bodies glistening white in the shadow. We envied them. Everything was surging forward, and it was a fine experience, but we would have liked a bathe. Heat flowed along the floor of the valley between the hills.

The valley was maybe three miles wide. From the hillside we dug the slits in we could see the hill called Long-stop over to the left, and very small under the mountains. Medjez-el-Bab was behind us now, behind the shoulder of Bou Arara, on the river. Tracks lay on the level earth perfectly white in the sun, going south to Medjez, and forward along the valley through the yellow and brown country where the burned-out tanks were, to the haze in the distance, beyond the Bou. It had a longer name, this

hill I write of, but it was always called, simply, the Bou. During the day the gunners tried to find the mortar that was bombing us, and we could see the white puffs on the lean face of the Bou ; but they did not find it.

In the afternoon the guns began to move up on the sloping ground behind us, and even among our reserve companies, though there were already two or three regiments in the valley that we had seen ; we thought then, when we passed them, that there may have been more. Later we saw how many there were. We dug all day while the guns were coming up.

"Quite a concentration," Allan Gerard said. The sweat was making rivers in the dust on his brown face.

"Yes." We stood together leaning on the picks and watched them. The way they got into position was fine, they seemed extremely good. Where there were no tracks they made new ones, and the dust followed the guns and limbers and dragons and carriers and ammunition trucks and dispatch riders wherever they went. Indeed, there was nowhere that you could see where there was not movement and dust, at the foot of the mountains, in the flat country by the railway embankment, and among the trees in Smidia and in the red wadi behind us there was dust in the afternoon sunshine. In the corn below Bou Arara tanks wallowed in the corn.

A gunner subaltern came up to us. "I'm moving in on you," he said, grinning. "Sorry." He was young and pleased and sweating, and had a big black moustache powdered with dust, so that it looked grey and mature.

"The hell with the guns," I said.

"Fine : thanks," he said.

We heard the bomb coming, and went to ground. While we lay there we heard the report somewhere ahead of us on the Bou ; that was how long it took for sound to travel. "You really ought to get that mortar," I said. We stood up.



"A little later," the subaltern with the moustache said, "A little later on we'll get it all right." He dusted his clothes. "I'm afraid you won't sleep much to-night. We're pretty close on your tail." He grinned. "Sorry."

"Don't keep apologizing."

"All right."

We asked him what time the guns started.

"At seven."

We did not finish digging till six o'clock. The sun rested a little while on the crest of the ridge over on the other side of the valley, and then slipped down beyond the black peaks very quickly. A faint breeze carrying the sweet smell of unburied bodies came from the north, and a long way off there was radio playing dance music, maybe from London or New York or somewhere, and it was extremely moving at that moment; a man was whistling while he shaved in the mirror of a truck at the edge of the wadi. The hush persisted until you felt it would be wrong to break it, and spoke only in whispers. We were very tired with digging all day. We smoked and had a drink. Allan Gerard always had whisky in his flask. The enemy had stopped mortaring the hill.

When we first saw the Arab he was on a donkey. He sat astride the animal's cruppers; it was a small donkey, and the man's thin dusty legs touched the ground on either side. He was wearing an old British battledress blouse with blood on the ripped sleeve and a yellow rag round his head and a Ghoum cloak. From time to time he beat the donkey detachedly with a stick, and the beast would quicken its pace for a few yards, and then drop its head again and slow to a tired shuffle. On the Arab's gaunt face there was a grey stubble, and his eyes watered persistently. Maybe he was sixty. Perhaps the donkey was sixty as well. They looked very old.

Sergeant-Major Green shouted: "Hey, you!"

The Arab did not seem to hear him. "Hey, Mahommed!"

The Arab stopped, then looked at the Serjeant-Major.

"Where the hell are you going?" And then, "I said where the hell are you going? Compris?"

In a minute the Arab raised the stick and pointed forward along the track. Then he fumbled among the rags over his belly and held something out to the Serjeant-Major.

"Æuf?" he said.

"Listen, Abdul, I said where are you going along this track. Understand? Savvy?"

"Æuf. Vingt francs." He held out the egg.

"Jesus. You better get out of here. Back. Allez. Go on, my son, allez back the way you bloody came." He pointed, back towards Medjez, over the hill.

"Home."

"Nothing doing, Mahommed. Back. Go on, you bastard, get out of here." The Serjeant-Major shouted to Marley to bring a rifle and bayonet. He fixed the bayonet and cocked the action. "Now," he said, "go back the way you came like a good lousy wog. Get it?" He motioned with the bayonet.

But the Arab beat the donkey and they went forward slowly down the track into the valley, his legs dangling foolishly in the dust. Green sighted on the man's back and then I told him not to fire. He had had to shoot several Arabs when we were fighting in the Goubellat Plain, we knew they were giving information to the enemy, but this time it did not matter, it was too late, there was nothing that could stop us now.

"He's fifth column, sir," the Serjeant-Major said. "I can get the bastard, I can get him dead easy."

"Let him go."

The Arab went on down the track and out of sight below the first crest. Later he reappeared, and we could

see him till the night fell, a small black speck scarcely moving on the white road through the flat country.

The barrage began in the half light. We heard the distant shouting first, and then the guns fired. Over the hill the mediums opened fire. Every gun in the valley fired. We saw then how many there were. You could see the flashes at the foot of the mountains and where Smidia was, and in the farm where we had shot the mule and on the long flank of Longstop and in the wadi that ran across the battalion position in the rear. Those near us fired, and they were close; the blast was pretty strong. The dust began to rise like a morning marsh mist when the geese are fighting and the yellow muzzle flashes shone through it close together, and very often so that the light was fluid, and went streaming to and fro across the valley. The noise made your head ache after a time. Later, lying below the surface of the ground in a slit, the noise was less aggressive. There was no moon. The stars were quite bright. I could see the sky in the uneven shape of the top of the slit I lay in, and the poppies leaning over the broken edge nodding in the blast of the guns of the subaltern with the dusty moustache were silhouetted black against the stars. Sometimes they were lit in the flashes, and then scraps of the dry earth broke from the walls of the trench and fell on to the blanket I lay under. The crickets came out and sang persistently in the stubble.

We moved forward in the early hours of the morning. The guns were still firing. It was cold then. We got on to the track in single file, everybody shivering and nearly asleep. Nobody said anything. Only Allan Gerard whispered: "The Bou, for a bet." I could hear his teeth chattering with the cold. We moved off, marching silently; in the dewy dust at the side of the track we could see clearly in the unceasing gunflashes. There were some dead in the stubble, and we passed a big tank with its gun drunkenly

askew, and then another, and in a mile or two there were six or seven all together all drunk and massive in the dark.

Where the track came in from the west we found the Arab. We were below the Bou. There was fighting on the slopes, and the liquid spatter of tommy-guns and the crack of Enfields and Schmeissers came down on the breeze faintly. We turned off towards the noise. Then we saw the shape on the white track and heard the strange hollow crunch of the donkey's jaws cropping the weeds. There was an Arab hut a little further along. Lying on the ground he looked asleep.

We cleared the Bou feature in the dawn of the day after the advance began, then we went back into reserve. We had a counter-attack role. We moved up on to the first major objective, a numbered hill, a few hours after the Indians left it.

The enemy had been holding the hill in considerable strength when the barrage came down. He was well dug in despite the rocky hardness of the earth, and the shell-proof dug-outs were very fine ; we never had anything like them. On the forward slope of the hill, the side overlooking the valley, there were beautiful positions for machine-guns and snipers. The spoil was white and showed up white in the sun. There was an elaborate observation post on the crest, deep and comfortable. The main positions, however, were on the reverse slope of the hill and in the valley and on the forward slope of the next hill. Here there were many anti-tank guns. The crews lay round them.

When we got there the sun was high, and already it was pretty hot and the scavengers on the hillside wore white knotted handkerchiefs on their heads against sunstroke. There was a slow heavy breeze. Later in the day the sirocco blew.

The barrage must have been bad. It must have been awful. There was a crater every few yards in any direction

you looked, and in this hard ground where the burst would be instantaneous the craters were scarcely bigger than the graze a light mortar bomb makes in ordinary earth. There were slivers of metal red-rusted by the dew like pine-cones on the floor of a forest. None of the dead were unscarred. They lay in strange attitudes among their paper. You could not believe at first that soldiers could carry so much paper with them. The scavengers moved about among the debris, feeling in the pockets of the dead men and turning things over and putting what they found into sacks and shouting to one another from time to time.

"I hope the bastards start a booby," Allan Gerard said.

I did not answer. The enemy had had no time to booby-trap the dead or indeed anything else on the hill.

They were mostly letters lying on the hill. There was one which began *Mein lieber kleiner Liebling* and ended with *Viele herzliche Grüsse und Küsse*. There were newspapers and magazines and lavatory paper and propaganda leaflets and postcards and birthday cards and books and exhortations from von Arnim. There were splintered rifles and blood-soaked equipment and stick grenades and clothes and bent machine-guns and belts of three-four and helmets and a great deal of wire; near the dug-outs there were a lot of empty bottles which had been bottles of white wine and of eau-de-cologne. The blankets in the pits were all scented, after the German habit, with eau-de-cologne. The air was sweet with the smell of scent and blood and white wine. It was strong. You never forgot it.

We heard laughter on the crest, and walked up there to where the observation post had been, and watched a boy digging out a man whose foot stuck up through the earth. He was tapping the foot with a spade and crying:

"Hey, wake up, wake up!" He had a fine pair of binoculars round his neck and a Luger and one or two other things on the ground beside him.

"Leave him alone," a man standing near said.

"He won't wake up."

Across the wide valley the low mountains lay serene and beautiful under the sun, streaked with cloud-shadow and wandering belts of poppy and on the slopes the dark green of young olive groves. There were larks singing in the sky and traffic flowed along the road with dust rising from each truck like white smoke.

"I hate this place. I hate this place more than any place I know," Allan Gerard said. We drove past the Typhoid board and past the church with the gaping holes in the roof through which the sun shone down the rubble inside. "I hate it for its own sake," he said, "for how it looks and smells and feels inside me."

We went on into the town. Four times, he said, we had come back to Medjez on the river. I said I felt much the same about it as he did. The sun threw the shadow of the ragged standing wall across the road. The Dubonnet sign and the Peugeot sign were still there outside the garage; Arabs slept in the shade among the dusty masonry. There were no buildings left whole in the town anywhere. When we crossed the bridge I looked down to the shining river, remembering with distaste bathing in it. Further on, where the road forked to Goubellat, the dead mules at the corner on the minefield were showing white ribs like old boats upturned on a beach. They did not now smell so badly. There was a lot of traffic going mostly towards Tebourba.

"You hate it, don't you?" Allan Gerard said.

I said yes, I hated it. "Shut up."

"I don't believe you," he said in a minute. "You're lying. You don't give a tinker's curse either way. You're like every writer I ever knew. So goddamned busy analysing other people's emotions you never have time to have any of your own."

I said I felt fairly strongly about Medjez-el-Bab.

"You'll write about the bloody hole and glamorize it. You will. You'll glorify the whole bloody business."

"No I won't."

"You don't feel things. With your stomach. They don't worry you."

I said I felt things and anyway I wouldn't glorify the war.

"Maybe not consciously. You'll leave out the things that matter. That's the whole trouble. You'll write it so that it seems a fine thing."

"I won't. For God's sake shut up."

"Go to hell."

We drove along the road between the poplars.

"Put the smell in," he said. "Put in exactly how Donald smelled when we found him, and how we had to use shovels to get him into the grave."

"What are you trying to do?" I asked him.

"When the war's over I'm going to Murea, in the South Seas."

"Good."

We reached the cage soon after that.

Standing at the gate the road ran away to the left and right smoothly through the cornfields. It was an ordinary road, neither wide nor narrow, and the verges on either side were a little bald. The corn was brown; there were mines in it. To the right nearly a mile away where the road turned towards Medjez station, there was a small pine wood in which a unit of French colonial cavalry had bivouacked; from the road you could see the mules glistening among the trees. Beyond the corn the uneven hills were brown under the blazing sky. There was nothing else in the landscape.

When the first prisoners arrived it was already quite dark, and the moon was rising. The air carried the vile sweet smell of dead men, and the dust trails the trucks raised on the road drifted slowly over the corn. They were

Italians. We got them out of the big yellow trucks on to the road. It took a long time. They were very noisy and voluble, shouting urgently to one another above the drone of the engines. Everything they had or had found or stolen they brought with them, so that every man was ludicrously overburdened with suitcases and rolls of blankets and bottles of wine and scent and water cans and tents and Arab shawls and rucksacks. It took them a long time to find it all in the darkness, and much was lost or left at the roadside; the scavengers came out of the empty land, and for several days, until we had time to clear it, there were always a few men among the debris in the corn turning over the paper and boxes and biscuits and loaves of bread and rusty guns and Italian cigarettes and German clothes and boots and helmets and photographs of fat Italian women with pendulous breasts and wide smiles. Jam oozed across the road. Some of the trucks were on tow, sometimes three or four together, and one ran off the road into the corn and went up on a Teller mine; nobody was killed, but the explosion set fire to the corn, and the heat of the fire detonated another mine, and you could not go in to put the fire out; anyway it was too big. It burned for two days slowly, the smoke rising straight into the air. After the Italians, the Germans came to the cage, and then Germans and Italians all together in the same convoy driving their own trucks without escort in a river of traffic that flowed for three days and nights until we were hoarse with shouting. *Avanti* and *Marsch* and *Vorwärts* and dizzied by the sun in the long day and cold in the hours before dawn and sick with the whiff of bodies and carbon monoxide and burning corn and the sight of men in defeat who were not conscious of humiliation. We formed them up in columns at the gate. *In dreien. Hier in marsch Ordnung. Offiziere austreten. Marsch.* For Christ's sake, *Marsch.* They protested, calling out for Montaldi and dear Karl and



Enrico, and the dogs that escaped the string that held them and ran free among the boots and yelped under the wheels and fed all day among the debris. At the gate the German doctor waited for the truck with his medical supplies, and the Italian padre whose dimpled face was iridescent in the moonlight, who smelled of scent and wine and garlic, whose eyes were as big and soft as those of a pregnant girl, wanted to rear in the sentry box ; Oberst Micolai the Prussian with the lean yellow face went in without a word, but his adjutant smiled, and asked me if I knew Chelsea, he knew Chelsea, would I give a message to Ina ; and his orderly wanted to work in the British officers' mess, he having been a waiter in Hollywood a long time, and knew Marlene Deitrich most awfully well. He knew everybody, he said. He was singularly bald. Indeed he had no hair at all. And the political prisoners' wives wept at the gate. Vous, vous avez une mere. Je cherche mon fils, mon fils Aldo. Je vous en prie, il est ici, il est ici, je le sais. Mais si, mais si, je le sais. A puppy piddled against the wheel. Pretty soon it would be run over.

The Arabs came home, riding donkeys and mules and small carts full of veiled women and clothes and chattis and children in yellow and crimson and blue and purple clothes, with ornaments on their wrists, riding through the debris and men and trucks now the war was over. The puppy died whimpering. So many wheels went over the small red thing in the road that in an hour it disappeared.

# INNOCENT OF MURDER

OR

## A PILLION PROGRESS,

*being the account of how John Bunyan's kindness had  
unexpected results*

*(Adapted from the Diary of Agnes Beaumont)*

By WINIFRED GRAHAM WILSON

*Now it was the dead time of the night and noe house neere.  
And I was sadly frightened. There was my father lying on  
the floor of his chamber and I coulde preceive noe life in him.  
I was in a streit indeed so I unloct the doore to goe call my  
Brother.*

But suddenly this thought came to me : that *their stood  
rouges ready at the doore to knocke me o' th head.* Nevertheless I found strength to go to my brother's house and to cry out *in a dolefull manner under his Chamber window to the sad surprising and frighting of the whole family, they being in their midnichte sleepe.* As soon as he heard my sad tale my brother awoke his wife and *Called up his Servants, but they was soe frightened they could scarse put on their Cloths.*

When we got home again we met with a surprise indeed, for my father *was risen from the ground And layde upon ye bedd.* His life however was almost over, for *he spake but one word, or too, to my brother John, and his soul departed from him.* As for me, *I sat Crying in a dismall manner thincking what a great Chang death had made upon him of A suddaine whoe went well to bed and was in eternity by midnight.*

Then we sent word to tell the neighbours and among those who came to us were *Mr ffary and his Sonn, who soe soone as they came in house asked if the old man was departed*

*and somebody tould him yeas. And he Answered it was noe more than he lookt for. Now noebody tooke notice of them words till afterwards. But as things turned out we had cause enough to remember them.*

Now this was Tuesday night that my father died. And on that day there had been *A faire at baldocke. A Strange report ran from one End of ye faire to the other.* It was first set about by *Mr. Layne, that meet Mr. Bunyan and I on horse back at Gamgey townes End* on the Friday before, when I had gone to a Church Meeting there. That was a strange Friday for me.<sup>1</sup> At first my father said he would not let me go to the meeting but afterwards he gave me permission to go. I told him that I had arranged to ride behind Mr. Wilson who would call for me at my brother's house on his way to the meeting himself.

*Soe when I was ready I went to my Brothers, Expecting to meet with Mr. Wilson. And their I waited some time ; and Noe body came . . . At last un Expected came Mr. Bunyan . . . Soe my Brother said to him " I must desire you to Cary my Sister today behind you ". And he Answered my Brother very roughly, and said, " Noe not I, I will not cary her " . . . My Brother sd to him Againe " If yow doe not Cary her, yow will breake her heart " .*

*And he replied w<sup>th</sup> the same words Againe, th<sup>at</sup> he would not cary mee, that he would not cary mee. And he said " If I should cary yow, yor father would be greivous Angrey w<sup>th</sup> me ". Said I " If you please to carry me, I will venture that " . . .*

We had scarcely set off, as I heard afterwards, when my father was told that I rode behind Mr. Bunyan. *W<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> he fell into a passion and ran downe to the Close End, thincking to have mett me in the feilds, where he intended to have pulled mee off the horse backe, he was soe Angry.* For some had incensed him against Mr. Bunyan and spread false reports

<sup>1</sup> Friday, 13th February, 1674.

*of him and they affirmed them to my father for truth, and, poore man, he beleaved them.*<sup>1</sup>

When we got to the town's end ; we met a priest, one Mr. Lane, who lived then at Bedford, and used to preach at Edworth ; *and he knew us both, and spake to us and lookt of us, as wee rode Along the way as if he would have staired his Eyes Out . . .* So we came to Gamgy ; and after a while the meeting began, and God made it a blessed meeting to my soul indeed . . .

Well, when the meeting was done, I began to think how I should get home, for Mr. Bunyan was not to go by Edworth though he came that way. *And it was almost night and very Durty . . . And my thoughts began to worke, and my heart to be full of feares lest I should not get home that night . . . Soe I went first to one, and than to Another, to aske who went that way could carry me some part of the way home ; but their was noe body could supply my wants, but A maide that lived at hincksworth, halfe a mile off my fathers, and, the wayes being soe durty and deepe, I was afraid to venture behind her. But I did, and she set mee down at Sister Prudons gate.*

*Soe I came home plosshing through the durt over shoes, haveing noe pattings on. I made what hast I could, hopeing I should be at home before my father was A bed ; but when I came neere the house, I see noe light in it. Soe I went to the doore, and found it Lockt. I called to my father and asked him to let me in. Said he " Where yow have beene all day, goe at night " . . . for he was very Angry with me because of Mr. Bunyan, and would not listen to me. So finding all my entreaties vain I went into the barn and there I stayed all night. It frose vehemently y<sup>t</sup> night, but I*

<sup>1</sup> *Grace Abounding*, sixth edition, 1688, paragraphs 308, 310 :

. . . It began therefore to be rumored up and down among the People that I was a Witch, a Jesuit, a High-way-man, and the like.

But that which was reported with the boldest confidence, was, that I had my Misses, my Whores, my Bastards, yea, two Wives at once . . .

*felt noe cold; the dirt was frosen upon shoues in the morning.*

Well, from Friday night till Sunday night my father would not let me into the house. But when I promised that I would not go to another Church Meeting as long as he lived, without his consent, he said I might go in. So I stayed with him on Sunday night and all day Monday too. Then came Tuesday and *in the Evening my father said "It is A very cold night; we will not sitt up too long to-night" . . . Soe after Supper as he sat by the fyre he tooke A pipe of Tobacco . . . and he bid me take up the Coales and warme his bed; which I did.* And that night he died.

We concluded for the funeral to be on Thursday, *and spoke for wine and all things to come in. We alsoe invighted all o' freinds and relations.* Then Mr. ffeery sent for my Brother to his house and asked him this question "*Doe yow thincke yor. father dyed A naturall death?*" To which my brother, amazed, made answer "*I know he did dye A naturall death*" . . . Then said Mr. Fary "*I beleeve yor Sister poysoned him*". "*I hope*" said my Brother, "*we shall satisfie yow to the Contrary.*"

Then came my brother home with a heavy heart and next morning he told me what Mr. Fary had said. It was a sad and sudden surprisal to me, but I quickly told him that my conscience was clear of blame. So my brother said to me that he would send to *Potten for Mr. Halfehead, A Doctor and Surgeon both.* He would send, too, to all those invited to the funeral and tell them it had been put off.

Mr. Halfehead had many things to ask me, *how my father was before he went to bed; and what Supper he eat* and so on. Then *he vewed the Corps and went to Mr. ffeerys to talke with him . . .* Mr. Halfehead soon saw no arguments would convince him, so he came back *and said we must have a Coroner and A Jewry.* I prayed him that he would

please to open my father so that my innocence should be made known. But he said there was no need to have him opened.

On Friday morning my brother sent for the coroner and jury to come that same day, which Mr. Fary heard of. Said he to my brother *I would wish yow to meet the Coroner at biglesworth. And Agree it their, and not let him Come through ; for it will be found petty Treason ; She must be burned.* But my brother answered him *We are not Afraid to let him Come throw.* Now this also troubled me that if I suffered, another innocent person would suffer too, for *Mr. ffeery said that In<sup>o</sup> Bunyan gave me Counsell to poyson my father when he Caried me behind him to Gamgy, and gave me the stuff to do it with.*

At last came the Coroner and Jewry to vew the Corpses. *And I, with some neighbours was bye the fyre . . . Some of the Jewrymen tooke me by the hand, the teires running downe their Cheecks, And said to mee " Pray god be thy Comfort, for thou art as Inocent as I am, I beleeve "*. Then they went to my brother's house and when they had dined they set about their business. The Coroner called Mr. Fary and asked him what he had to say *As to this Maides Murthering of her father, And what ground yow have to Accuse her.* And he told them of the difference between my father and me, and of my being shut out of doors, and of my father's dying two nights after I came in. Then the Coroner questioned him further *but he said little or nothing to the purpose, Soe the Coroner was very Angry at his Contrary Answers.*

*Soe the Coroner calls me " Come sweetheart " said hee " tell us where yow was that night yor father shut yow out ". And I told him in the barn. Then I described to him the manner of my father's illness and of how he had been taken in the night. I kept nothing back from him but told him all. Soe he said to me " Sweetheart I have noe more to say to*

*thee*". But to Mr. Fary he said *Yow that have defamed this maide had needs make it yor business now to repair her reputation Againe . . . If yow should give her five-hundred pounds it would not make her amends*. Then he took me by the hand "*Come Sweetheart said hee doe not be daunted god will take Care of thy preferment and provide the A husband, notwithstanding the mallice of this man*". And indeed I had cause to thank God that he convinced them of my innocency. *And I hard that A twelvemonth after they would speake of me wth teires*.

Thus I have told you of the good and evil things that came to me at that time. *I wish I was as well in my soul As I was then*.

## A HOPE AGAINST HOPE

CAN YOU NOT see, poor tree, the rotting leaves  
Of last year's spring? Those dead brown leaves should  
chide

Your budding hope. And yet you dare out-thrust  
The tender challenge of your green, ignore  
The chain which binds you to the winter gone  
And to the doom before. Ambitious tree,  
So rooted in the rot of last year's hope,  
Whose present pride will nourish hope as brief  
In futile fated rhythm till the end of time.

Bound too am I. My joys will die  
In griefs, wise pain succumbs to hope. And life  
Enslaved swings like a senseless pendulum.  
The anguish of our desperate hearts is nurse  
To ecstasy; disaster suckles hope,  
Until at last at one with rotten leaves  
Though flesh should feed its sap to other life  
Our minds at least are stilled, and one  
With yesterday.

DAN DAVIN

## CHAPTER ONE

By HENRY TREECE

IF, AS AN eminent writer has said, the end is near the beginning, then I am in reasonable danger of finishing my career as a poacher dressed in brown corduroys, with a horse-pistol in my pocket, and followed by a troupe of curly-coated retriever bitches . . . .

I suppose I was one and a half years old when the 1914 war broke out. I can only remember the steel doors my father had put on the cellar window to keep bombs out, the broken piano which we stored for friends whose house had let the bombs in, my bitter tears when I understood that my mother was going to leave me so as to make shells for soldiers in a munitions factory, my unutterable joy when she returned to the house and said that she had decided not to do so after all, and the authentic, blood-red fiery cross, bigger than a house, which I was taken to see, perched on the top of a near-by hill, foretelling a British victory and the end of the war . . .

Then I was taken to live with my grandparents in a district not at that time industrialized.

I can never see red May now but I think of it as I first saw it, hanging over my grandmother's high-walled garden, where I and my small girl-cousin so busily searched underneath all the gooseberry bushes for toy dolls, called by us "fairy punks", which my bearded, sailor-capped grandfather used to hide for us, pretending that they grew there . . .

And here I am reminded of my Uncle Herbert, who married my mother's sister, a man bearded like the wrath of God, and nearly seven feet tall, who should have been a Welsh preacher, but who took to the land and died with farms all along the Border, a rich old man.

Both my grandfather and this Uncle Herbert owned wagonettes, tall four-wheeled vehicles, capable of holding



a small family each. I can remember such a twin-family excursion once, which carried us out to a small village, which, sadly, I have since tried unsuccessfully to find on many occasions. I remember the picnic we had. Then suddenly there appeared some ganders, hissing so ferociously, and running forward so fiercely, that I had to be lifted, yelling, on to a large stone roller for safety. The journey home must have been a relief to me, for I have forgotten all about it.

Among other picturesque relatives in whose shadows I lived at this time was my great-grandfather William, whose stern, cravatted, velvet-coated image in oils glared down on me from the drawing-room walls, framed in very heavy gilt. In his hands he held a magnificent beaver hat, sign of his substance, as owner of a country mansion, a factory, and a coach and horses. This hat became an obsession with me as I gazed at the portrait, for on pay-days, as I was told, it was filled with golden guineas, and my great-grandfather walked out to pay his men from the hat. This story had the obvious, sniggering conclusion . . . One day the crown of the overworked beaver fell out, and that week the nimble took home more wages than the lazy.

Then there was his wife, my great-grandmother, whose name I have forgotten. She, as my precocious ears gathered, was walking one day in the village when a drunken workman disgusted and frightened some young girls by leaping out from behind a wall and exhibiting his private parts to them. My great-grandmother, with a lack of squeamishness so foreign to what we are told of the times, went forward and, taking the workman adroitly by his offending parts, *dragged* him along the main street. He is reported to have said, "Oh Mistress, oh Mistress, let me go and I won't never do it any more." However, finding my great-grandmother obdurate, he did the only reasonable thing, and, yielding up the ghost, died on the spot.

It seems that my influences were an alternation of the soundly genteel and the haphazardly picaresque. For instance, there was my Uncle Tom, a pillar of wealthy righteousness, one son an architect, the other an Officer in the Royal Navy; while, by contrast, there was my harum-scarum, penniless, poaching Uncle Elijah . . . The eternal boy, with a catapult in his pocket and a string of obedient and doting retriever bitches at his heels. No Sunday morning was complete without him. An hour before lunch we would get restless, wondering whether he was coming or not. Then we would hear a whistle, perhaps a snatch of song, a gruffly loving curse at a dog, and he would come swinging along the path to the house, hands in pockets, an old tweed cap on the back of his head, a great eagle's nose jutting out over a scrubby moustache, a lank rat-tail of dark hair dangling over his long forehead—and the greatest grin in the world over his thin red face . . . There would be beer, a coy silence, a few grunts and pretended kicks at the favoured bitch who had been allowed to enter and sit under his chair, and then the most wonderful tales would begin, tales that he had only that morning picked up from some Gippo's tent, tales of fights between his bitches and theirs, or him and them. I was thrilled and gratefully proud to find that my uncle had finished victoriously over the black-faced Gipsies, and his bitches over theirs. And the stories always ended the same way—he was invited into their caravans and asked to become one of them, or they tried to beg his bitches in exchange for theirs . . .

A colossally wonderful rogue, and almost my ideal poet. Of course he was a true Romantic. On the death of my grandparents I can remember the other members of the family grumbling and quarrelling over the apportionment of buildings, land, furniture, and money; but not Elijah. His only grouse, and that almost a tearful one, was that my

grandfather's horse-pistol had been given to my mother and not to him ! To pacify him, my mother at last handed it over, and Elijah carried it away in triumph, to polish and clean it daily, and to keep it wrapped in cloth, a treasured exhibit to all visitors, in the best chest of drawers . . .

Elijah's constant friend, butt, and drinking partner was one Dick Belcher—and no man was ever named more appropriately—an immense, red-faced, bald-headed rascal, with a face like a Bowery villain and the heart of a sheep-dog. This Dick Belcher, dressed in odd, cast-off coats and trousers, sockless and invariably wearing torn and dirty old rubber shoes, was my childhood prototype of a man with no mother to look after him. I cannot now understand why, on behalf of a man of forty-five at least, it was so often pointed out to me by various members of the family that "Poor Dick Belcher had no mother". Was it an excuse for his irregular behaviour, or a horrid warning to me? Anyway, many a tear did I shed on the poor rogue's behalf . . . The roundness of his thick shoulders, the half-afraid smile as he hung his great round head on one side to answer a question, the way his long red wrists hung out of his tattered sleeves, these things have almost the power to make me weep again, even as I write of him . . .

No boy could have had a more delightfully ruffian introduction than I did to the old legends, the ballads, the wiles of Blue-eyed Nellie at *The Engine*, and the technique of badger-baiting, all intermixed with Moody and Sankey. But by far the most lasting and vivid of all the education I received in these years were my instructions in Highwaymanship, in which staid Uncle Tom competed with his precise knowledge against Elijah's fantasy. The sum total was an effect of contemporaneity, as though Turpin himself belonged to the last generation but one of our family, and had died, let us say, about five years before my birth.

For this instruction Elijah provided the descriptive talk and anecdotes, and Uncle Tom the pictorial illustrations, in the shape of a beautiful set of old prints. They were grand things, those pictures (I have since tried to find them in attics and in old boxes under beds, but they must be ashes these twenty years, though I hope they turned the heads of a few other right young lads before they went), big, fantastically brightly-coloured, of a nostalgic world that gets further and further away as one foolishly grows up. In them I saw gallant Black Bess leaping a spiked toll-gate at midnight. I held my breath to think how close those devilish prongs were in that moment to her gallant black belly. And how I roared with joy to see the gatekeeper, half blind with sleep, peering from his bedroom window, his white wig dangling over one side of his fat head ! Cocks, hens, and ducks were scuttling across the moonlit road in terrific panic, and on the clear horizon galloped half a dozen winded horsemen, futile pursuers, who must wait till the last page for their dastardly victory.

Another print showed courtly Claude Duval dancing a coranto on the grass with a captured lady, while her coachman sat, half mad with terror, on his box, waiting to see how the insane escapade would end. How that young woman seemed to be enjoying it, and with what poise and grace did Claude doff his three-cornered hat ! His ruffled wrists, black-masked face, twirled moustachios, full-skirted red coat, and long, shiny black boots live on through my dreams ! In my childhood I prayed hard for a return to the fashions in dress of these earlier days !

Yet another print showed the lamentable death of faithful Tom King. There he lies, on London's cobbles, at the left of the print, the crimson blood plastering the white cravat on his chest. He has just said, " Shoot, Dick, for these villains must never take me alive ! " The villains mentioned here are a group of night-watchmen, with staves and

lanthorns, backed up by a more formidable set of Bow Street Runners, armed with sabres and pistols. Their attention at the moment of depiction is divided between chagrin and sorrow at Tom's death, and the desire to capture Turpin, who is situated back right of the scene, with Duval and Sixteen-String Jack (how excitedly I counted those silken strings hanging from the tops of his riding-boots, and how glad I was that the artist had given him the right number !), before his smoking pistol can be reloaded.

Tom King's passionate request for death at his friend's hand rather than at the hands of his captors, stirred me as nothing before had ever done. With a child's amorality, I looked on this act as one of high nobility of purpose, like "dying for one's country" (even of greater importance, since that act had been cheapened for me during my early years by all the little Pokes and Pom-dogs who were taught by their sex-starved owners to "die for their country". My childhood is littered with the panting "corpses" of these costive canine patriots). And, conversely, I regarded the Keepers of the Law as enemies, like the Germans. Yet, in my reflective moments, I half-doubted Turpin's wisdom in following out his friend's instructions so efficiently . . .

But the tears I shed for valiant Tom may not be compared in quality or quantity to those I wasted at the passing of Black Bess . . . I see her now, exhausted, kneeling down on the broad highway in sight of York Minster. Dick is standing by her, immaculate in red coat and black boots, hat in hand, wishing her good-bye as his ever-persistent pursuers again appear on the skyline. And Bess, gallant soul, is gazing up at him, with great, round, bloodshot, faithful, beseeching eyes, as if to say, "Please leave me to my fate, dear Master, and save your precious self, for the villains are yet again close on your heels." (At this age started my kindness to animals.) But the harrowing scenes

must take their course ; the next print shows Dick, mounted on a grey mare which he has stolen, galloping through York, slap-bang into an ambush, and still followed by the egregious Runners who will cut off his retreat if such a hero as he even thinks of making one. His end is now inevitable, and it is with great sorrow, though no surprise, that we at last see him mounting the scaffold, dressed still like a real gentleman, but kicking off his elegant boots as he climbs, and saying, "The rogues said I would die with my boots on—but they lie in their throats."

I had the wrong sort of rearing to make me fit for a life of motor cars and sten guns ; for coaches and rapiers—yes.

And so these memories race each other through the first ten years of my life ; the invariable new penny my grandmother gave me each Saturday morning, my grandfather's Quaker friend who wore stays, the mournful voice with which one of my aunts read out to her assembled family the Sunday instalment of a rural romance from the weekly paper, a voice so reminiscent of a B.B.C. Poetry Reading to-day, and finally the family anecdotes of our relatives who had been on the right (but defeated) side in the Irish Troubles . . . I must have been as happy then as any small boy in the world.

But shortly my grandparents died, and family quarrels broke up our community. Motor cars became ever more popular and our horses were sold. Highwaymen gave way to Red Indians, and later to Rockets to the Moon. I had reached the Scientific stage in my development, so it became time for me to go to school and learn something useful. The carefree poaching days, the vicarious Sunday mornings in a Gipsy's tent on the near-by Common, the horse-pistol and the string of black retriever bitches—these things were put away, to be forgotten for years in the interests of my education.

## POETRY

### THE HEART'S WILD GEESE

HEART MUST ALWAYS come at last to home,  
Like the wild geese who wheel their way through time  
Back to the timeless pool and homely sedge.  
They who went questing, screaming to the edge  
Of man's small world, over the edge some say,  
Have seen the iceberg's glory, seen the way  
The coloured sun hangs curtains in the sky,  
And barren coves where ancient whales still lie  
Covered with barnacles, as old as Spain,  
Living the glorious bloody days again  
When dragon-prowed boats first thrust through their  
dream.

All this the wild geese see, and their strange scream  
Sounds back along the centuries. They know  
Where palaces lie buried in the snow;  
In passing, their sharp eyes have often snatched  
At coral-courts, where rituals, unwatched  
By any other eye save gull's, are kept  
By weed-green seamen who have safely slept  
Three hundred years a thousand leagues from home.  
And after all these marvels still they come,  
The feathered faithful, landing on the mere  
As heart returns to home, year upon year.

HENRY TREECE

## THE RETURN OF SPRING

THE SPRING RETURNS. Green valleys, the sparkling meadows

Crowd gold, under larks, wry-rooted, the gorse, deep-scented.

Lovely it is to live, to turn the eyes seaward,  
To laugh with waves that outlive us.

And marvellously the sundering, receding seawaves  
Pound the resounding sands ; they knock at the hour-glass.  
Thunder compels no man, yet a thought compels him,  
Lost, neglected, yet tender.

Why in the wood, where already the new leaves mending  
Winter's wild net, cast fragile, immature shadows,  
Do I tread pure darkness, resisting that green dominion ?  
What is the thing more sacred ?

Taut branches exude gold wax of the breaking buds.  
Sweet finches sing. The stream has a hundred voices  
Unheard before. One leans on the grass like a bridegroom,  
And death slips under the bride-sleep.

Wait for no second Spring in Bishopston Valley.  
Once, once only it breaks. If you plunge your fingers  
In the stream, all secrets under the Earth grow articulate  
In a moment, and for you only.

Diamonds of light, emeralds of leaves, green jewels :  
For me the unnoticed, death-touching script is more  
passionate.

Cover the tome with dust ; there dwells the redeemer,  
Deathlessly known by the voice-fall.

O Spring, the box of colours, blue sky, green trees !  
Has the brook ears ? Donne has delivered his sermon.  
Not easily you beguile the pulse, the footprint  
Vaulted with intimate music.



Yet you return, bring beauty to Earth. I see  
The skill and wonder you practise upon our eyes.  
Break the veiled branches. Still, in the single leaf  
It holds you, silken, a garland.

O returning child, not knowing why you were born,  
Not understanding world's beauty the dead sustain,  
The sharpness of colour, the clearness of water are yours ;  
The love there shadowed you know not.

What first I feared as a rite I love as a sacrament.  
The Spring returns. I look. There is no dissembling.  
The brook falters, runs on. I divine those meanings,  
Listening to tongues that are silent.

VERNON WATKINS

## THE DREAMERS

AND WHEN YOU are tired  
sink between the sheets of the found peace of Africa,  
now with a thousand agonies of lovers,  
now with those expired  
human histories,  
Fondouk and Hamman-Lif, Kairouan and Kasserine,  
all these believed gains cross us and press like victims  
on our eyes.

Here enduring the skyfire,  
the sight of the picturesque ordinary oxen,  
the Arab cavalcade of caravans and kings,  
dust and desire,  
here between the melon moon  
and earth, after earth, and here forgetting reality,  
and remembering the primitive solitude  
of humanity, we lean  
and seek loveliness.

We the owners of earth for a moment  
seek oblivion within our bodies  
and the kindest kiss.

We desire simplicity,  
for where the heart is there would the body be,  
and where the necessary dream is there must the heart be :  
so the world is turned for a fly,  
and the universe is held for you.  
Remember, lovers, where the heart would be,  
remember this sad continent and remember the dreamers  
who dream of you.

G. A. WAGNER

## POLKA FOR ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

COULD I WRITE a song to you,  
could I give your eyes  
praises that belong to you,  
Time would not suffice  
you to read or I to write  
one poor quarter the delight,  
one poor quarter the delight  
rich within them lies.

Words would then be rue to you,  
language but a blain,  
though I mint it to a new for you,  
Love to entertain,  
for your eyes would tire at length,  
suffering from mine own strength,  
suffering from mine own's strength,  
singing what I've seen.

No more plague of writing now  
  need your eyes endure  
for, in you delighting, now  
  I proffer blindness' cure.  
    Give me leave to live and look,  
    learn and love in you, my book.  
    Learn?—that's love—in you, my Book.  
    All's Index else, abjured.

Speech be superseded. You  
  by you are expressed  
now I know it needed you  
  to enclose the best.  
    Watch how, as I genuflect,  
    from my eyes your own reflect.  
    From my eyes your own, reflect,  
    hand you homage best.

So—

I'll not write a song to you,  
  I'll not give your eyes  
praises that belong to you  
  lest mere words suffice.  
    Paper, see, aside I throw !  
    Palimpsest then let me grow.  
    Skin I am, and parchment so,  
    Love's lay to realize.

ROBERT HERRING

## A CITIZEN WITH THIRTY-FIVE VERTEBRAE

By ALEX COMFORT

JANOSIK, WHO USED to live in the flat next to mine, was a student of human affairs. We became intimate only because the wall was so thin (the builder was a Senator, and gave himself the contract) and though we could not always see each other we knew each other's affairs as closely as if we had been Siamese twins. I could hear him reading out Godwin and Kropotkin to his wife, late at night when I wanted to sleep. I even knew that a baby was going to be born to him before he told me (had I not heard it being begotten?) and I listened to the entire process of its birth before the notice was printed in the papers, bowls clattering, Mrs. Janosik yelling, the doctor swearing, and finally the baby himself saying what he thought of the flat with its draughts and the exposed pipes which the Senator had put in for cheapness and which obliged the porter's wife to run up and down stairs with a big kettle.

The only thing I could not guess was the child's sex—the wall did not let through the midwife's voice, because she had a very husky one, and wore a mask. Janosik came round when I was at breakfast next morning and asked for a drink from my coffee-pot as his wife was still sleeping and he could not make good coffee.

"You've forgotten a lot since you left the University," I said, being too well-mannered to poke my nose into business I already knew a good deal about. But he was in no sort of mood for a joke.

"This is terrible, as well as magnificent, Schimmelbusch," he said. "You can't imagine. The child's a male."

"Top hole," said I, "couldn't be better. You won't have to call it Rosa Corday Aspasia" (I knew his tastes as well as I know my own).

"But fancy an Anarchist having a son in these days. You know what it will mean. To see him in a helmet and boots, sitting on the seats marked SOLDIERS ONLY, would be the death of me."

"Well, it's a bit soon to think of that," I said to him. "We may find a way out. Perhaps he'll break his femur or get infantile paralysis before the next war breaks out. Beside, you might equally well see a daughter of yours wearing a beret and waving a flag."

He seemed to see the point, and a little later on I heard that the child had been registered as Maxim Wilkes Bakunin Pacek, and the howling of it next door whenever I wanted to work or sleep made me wish it had been called Beelzebub Diabolicus.

However, a few days later, as soon as Mrs. Pacek was well again, and getting back to her normal shape, Janosik held a party in honour of the baby, and I was obliged to go. I knew about the party before he put his head round the door, as I could hear the plates being put out, and presently the wall of my flat began to bulge where people were leaning against it—it was that sort of wall. It would have been cold in there, if the room hadn't been so jammed that one couldn't move. There were people sitting about on the bed and knocking down books, three deep, and mostly strangers. The man behind me had pyorrhoea and I am sure it was unhealthy for the child, but everyone was very jolly, and Janosik had some tokay in a tooth glass which we could pass round. One of his friends was a tram-conductor in uniform, and he rang his punchbell and wound out yards of paper tape to amuse the child, while Mrs. Pacek sat there smiling and being respectfully treated, because so few of the neighbours believed that she could have a child on Janosik's income.

Someone said "But you're a brave woman," and Mrs. Pacek only answered "But they come—what is one to

do ? ” as if Maxim Wilkes Bakunin had been an oversight, which I knew he was not.

The conductor was dancing, mostly on people's feet, and snapping his fingers to amuse the baby, and every time he jumped, the whole block of flats shook. Pacek had got out the other bottle, some Liebfraumilch, and as there wasn't sufficient for us to get drunk, the whole business might have remained there, if Havas hadn't come in. I heard him pounding and blundering up the stairs even above the noise of the conductor dancing. He was a medical student, and a horribly obnoxious person, and this time he was drunk.

He barged into the room and shouted “Hullo, people, hullo, hullo !”

“That's no way to behave,” said the man with pyorrhoea.

“But I had to come. Pacek's an old old friend. They didn't give me the letter till I was drunk.”

“Then be quiet,” said Janosik. “Look at the baby.”

Janosik held him up. He was naked and kicking. We all looked, and made civil remarks. Suddenly Havas brightened up again.

“He's just like a bloody monkey,” he said.

There was dead silence because it was true. He had big ears, a small, wizened, intelligent face, and at two weeks he could hold up his head and look about him. Janosik looked at the baby. So did his wife.

“He only needs a tail—ha, ha, ha !” bawled Havas. “Janosik Pacek, your ancestors have found you out !”

Mrs. Pacek burst into tears in the corner, and we hurried Havas out and left as fast as we could. I dared not return to my room. On the stairs, as we slithered about in the snow, the conductor said “The most embarrassing part of it was that it's true. He does only need a tail.”

I did not dare to face Janosik, and so I went for a long walk, round the embankment and over the swing bridge

and back again. Clouds of snow were coming down. I crawled home after supping out, and lit my fire quietly, but Janosik heard me because the wall was so thin that one could hear matches struck on the far side of it.

When he came in I said "Janosik, I'm sorry. But it wasn't my fault."

Then he came rushing at me like a bear. "I want you to lend me all the money you've got," he said, "all of it. It's a matter of life and death."

"My God," I said. "Has Mrs. Pacek had a hæmorrhage?"

He flapped me aside. "No, no, no, no, she's all right. It's Maxim. I must take him to a surgeon to-morrow—to Professor Radek, he's the best in the town."

"Has he got pyloric stenosis?"

"Nothing like that. I'm going to safeguard his future. I'll make him the one happy man of his generation. I'll protect him from this damn bloody generation if it costs me everything I have and makes me sweep out the Underground."

"Now Pacek," I said, "we know one another. Both of us went to the University on next to nothing. If you see Radek, he won't accept your Maxim in the Faculty of Medicine yet—you're losing your grip."

"Fool, fool, fool," said Pacek—"I don't want that. It's Havas—he gave me the idea . . ."

"What idea?"

"*I'm going to get Maxim fitted out with a tail.*"

"Pacek," I said, "you're drunk."

There were tears in his eyes. "No, Schimmelbusch, I'm sober. You don't know what I've been through since I knew I was father to a son. When he's eighteen, they'll make him choose between a butcher's life and a sheep's death. I won't have it. This is the only way."

"A tail won't help him."

"But it will. You can only conscript men, not monkeys. Monkeys have no stake in society, and the lunatics let them alone. There are no civil disabilities attached to being a monkey—except that you can't vote, and who wants to? The University . . ."

"Doesn't give diplomas to monkeys."

"How do you know? There weren't any monkeys in our year. I'll bet my boots nobody with a tail ever sat."

"But when he comes to marry—"

"Acquired characteristics aren't inherited," screamed Pacek, like a lunatic. "If he fails to find a wife I'll become a Chinese admiral. Schimmelbusch, I beseech you. . . ."

"It's a serious step," I said. "But I can see how you feel. I am at your disposal."

Radek was my old chief, and it was my good offices that put the deal through. They swore the theatre staff to secrecy. Radek had just lost two sons in the '14-'18 war, so he knew how we felt. Havas gave the anæsthetic with his eyes popping out of his head. I never saw such a beautiful operation. If only I could tell you how he mobilized the coccyx and took grafts for vertebrae out of Janosik's own tibia. . . . No sooner was Janosik conscious again than he ran to the registrar to annul Maxim's birth certificate.

"We find he's got a tail, therefore he's not human," he said.

Radek took a serious view of the whole thing, and was not happy. "I don't know how big it will be," he said—"The epiphyseal cartilages are there and it might grow. Still, I've painted his bottom blue with methylene blue so that he looks monkier than ever." Also, he waived his fees, so that I was saved and could go on with my work.

The child never looked back. He grew, he thrived. I could hear him shouting. Mrs. Pacek loyally rubbed his body with hair lotion so that there should be no mistake,



but he remained hairless. Still, the tail grew as Radek said it would. He grew, the tail grew. At school, they tormented him slightly till they learned that he could use the tail as a third fist. His parents conditioned him to be proud of it. I could hear Mrs. Pacek crooning "I'm glad I have a tail—I'll never be a soldier: I'm glad I have a tail."

It was not till he was seven that he received his first shock. I heard his bitter crying. Janosik came in to tell me. He had been to the zoo, and the monkeys had tried to arrest him as a deserter from the *Macacus Army*—the keepers told us there was a crusade going on between the two cages, who were trying to liberate one another by smashing each other's skulls. Still, the child soon forgot, though the hatred on the animals' faces had terrified him into nightmares.

At sixteen he was a fine tall boy, intelligent and well-spoken, and his singular advantage over everyone else had given him a most amazing detachment of outlook. He knew where he was going and why. He was a brilliant student, and graduated first in his class. He loved mankind, but was a stranger among them and immune from all kinds of corporate lunacy. Nobody discriminated against him, because he made no claims on them. At the University he was loved by his teachers and respected by his fellows. If they tied his tail to the bedstead, that harmed nobody. It had ceased to grow, and he could show it or not as he pleased. Radek was very pleased with his work, and Maxim called on him often, and before he was eighteen he was engaged to Radek's daughter, a pretty girl, who knew the history of the whole thing.

"Don't you find it embarrassing or troublesome?" I once asked Maxim.

"No, not at all. People treat me very decently," he said. "Either they think it's a disability and are too kind to talk of it, or they're innately kind to animals, or my tail

gives them a sense of superiority and they don't need to persecute me. The zoo is the only place I can't go safely. The monkeys would kill me for applying the same standards to the conduct of both the cages."

"Will you give your own son a tail?"

"Perhaps. It has yet to be tested in full."

At last the final test did arrive. It was not that they sent for him as soon as he was eighteen, but the neighbours resented his immunity. The papers got hold of it. They had headlines which denounced Maxim—MONKEY DENIES RIGHTNESS OF OUR CAUSE and MAXIM'S TAIL UNREAL SAYS BIOLOGIST. Janosik had worked out all the arguments for the tail into an article—that it gave immunity from the attentions of one's fellow citizens, that it would be a permanent source of livelihood if Maxim chose to go on the stage—so on, so forth. The press campaign grew. Finally an inspector called and made Maxim strip, and he pulled on the tail until Maxim roared—I could hear through the wall.

"You won't get away with this," said the Inspector.

"But you can see it's real," said Janosik, beside himself.

"Yes, but that makes no odds. We shall make a report."

"You can't conscript him," said Janosik, "unless you also conscript the entire Tiergarten."

"If the national cause and the cause of Civilization require it, we shall do even that," said the inspector, on his high horse. "No citizen can beard his fellows with impunity."

"You're a bloody Jack in office," said Janosik. "This tail is real, yes? You have no jurisdiction over anyone but human beings. How do you define a human being? As a tailless biped, yes? Then get out of here before I break every bone in your body."

"We shall see," said the inspector, and went.

Two days later as I listened at the wall I heard the tramp of boots, and in came an escort. They asked Maxim if he were Maxim, and Maxim replied that he had nothing to fear. Then they set off. Janosik was out, but he passed them on the stairs and turned to follow, while I sprinted behind. They took Maxim to a little office where there was a plank table and a typewriter, and behind the table a good citizen dressed up as a colonel.

"You will take the oath of allegiance" said the colonel.

"He bloody well won't," yelled Janosik—"Show them the tail boy, show them the tail."

"Shut up, you old scoundrel," said the colonel. "Now, my boy, the Senate have given a good deal of thought to your case. Are you going to do your duty?"

"If you mean, am I going to sacrifice my dignity as a monkey and become one of your Good Citizens, no. Such conduct would be both dishonest and unsimian."

"This is your last chance," said the Colonel.

"Stick it, Maxie—he's bluffing," said Janosik, dancing with glee, until one of the soldiers hit him on the head.

"I will not."

"Then we shall consider you as a member of the armed forces owing allegiance to the senate."

"In due deference, Colonel Zuckerguss, —— the armed forces and —— the senate."

"Then I am hereby empowered to conscript you."

"The tail, the tail," shouted Janosik, who had recovered consciousness. "You can't ignore the tail."

"That is true" said the colonel, "BUT WE CAN CUT IT OFF."

Maxim saw the danger. He struck down the nearest soldier and ran for the door. But they were after him in a moment. The colonel, waving his sword, the soldiers, the inspector, passers-by, the men who were digging up the road, policemen, Good Citizens of every kind.

As they ran, a horrible jibbering went up—"He won't muck in with us, cut his tail off, cut his tail off." Janosik and I ran as fast as we could, but it was useless. Along the tramlines and over the swingbridge he outdistanced them, but under the lime trees in the square the colonel caught up with him. He seized the tail. Maxim vanished in a kicking fighting mass of humanity. I could see his head and shoulders rising three times. Then there was a scream of anguish, and the colonel broke away, waving the blood-stained sword. The reddened tail sailed up into the branches of the lime tree and remained there till someone got it down. The soldiers dragged Maxim off, crying out—"I will never surrender."

It broke Janosik's heart. The Senate had Radek's daughter shot for her part in the conspiracy. Everyone was satisfied. Maxim, serving a long term of imprisonment, still maintained that he would never agree to become a man. But robbed of the internal secretion of the tail, a great change came over him. He earned good conduct and was released. I was ready to greet him, but he was not friendly.

"My eyes are opened," he said.

I told him about Radek's daughter. "She deserved it. After all, one must not withstand the Cause of Humanity." When he said that, I knew it was all over, and went away.

He was killed later on, fighting for civilization, though I forget on which side.

# LETTER TO ST. MALO

By STEFAN SCHIMANSKI

*"Have you written that letter?"*

His mouth was half-open as if he were trying to remember. On the wall a spider with long legs was sitting like a brooch in a shop window. Nobody wanted to buy it.

That letter, he thought and rubbed his chin with his right hand. He looked at his wrist-watch which he had lost. It was the first of July.

The first of July?

Of course, the first of July.

The problem became much easier. It became quite simple. You take a sheet of writing paper—cream yellow—and pen and ink—Royal Blue—and then you take an envelope and put the letter into the envelope and then you post it. Quite simple.

Then you post it?

But where do you post it to? This is all a logical process. It goes from sender to addressee. And there must be a sender and an addressee. But where does God live? Has He got a postal address? A secret address which is not in the directory?

He was still rubbing his face as if he could squeeze the answer out of himself.

The wind was blowing through the window into the curtain. The curtain, fixed at the top, yielded at the lower end, forming a triangle of some thirty degrees with the wall. It stood rigid in that position. Like a sail into which the wind is blowing, he thought, and watched. He forgot God. Like the spider, it crossed his mind. But the one is active and the other passive?

The question was quite stupid. The curtain relaxed. He fell back in his chair. Relax and the straight line is broken. The curtain struggled again to break way from the

wall to which it was chained. It struggled like two long brown legs.

The address, he thought and smiled as if he had found the address.

The legs were naked and brown with the exception of the toes. The toes were white as if bits of paper had been stuck on them. The paper wriggled and became still whiter.

"Looks silly—doesn't it?" she asked, and tried to wriggle away from him.

On the horizon a steamer disappeared into nothingness, leaving a smudge in the air as if someone had trod on a piece of charcoal in a blue nursery.

"Yes," he said.

The stone was hot. The silence trembled in her voice.

"What shall I do?" she asked.

At that moment a sound interrupted—or swelled—the trembling air. It came from far away, through thick walls. The walls had been built as a protection against pirates and they were so wide you could walk on top of them arm-in-arm. And when you walked arm-in-arm on top of them the space between the arm and the wall disappeared, although they said that the width was as wide as the Great Wall in China.

"Listen!" she said.

He listened. One . . . two . . . three . . .

Or did the sound come through thin, sawdust boards? Was it not quite near?

It must be the devil, he thought. Some devil was poking his nose out of somebody's breast-pocket. It popped in and out, teasing and playing with a man in a brown green gold-buttoned coat. The man in the brown green gold-buttoned coat stopped. He frowned his brows. His eyes followed somebody's movements. They moved from one side to the other. His face remained rigid, as if afraid to disturb the prey. He was like a hunter in the moment of

the kill. Then an unshapely hand jumped out of the trouser pocket as a bullet shoots from a rifle, and pounced on the devil, pinning him to the bottom of the breast-pocket. The man stood holding his chest as if he were suffering from an attack of asthma. His face was a curious mixture of embarrassment and delight.

"It is twelve o'clock," she said, and wriggled the white paper again.

"Is it?" he asked.

The sun was hot, and the man in the brown green gold-buttoned coat was wiping his forehead with a large white handkerchief.

She buried the white of her toes in the sand and said, "Lunch!"

Lunch at twelve and lunch at one. The connecting link is the white. The missing hour is the address that is missing. The answer is really quite simple. Where does God live? Between 12 and 1!

The problem is narrowed down considerably. People are afraid of Time. They think Time is the great enemy. In reality it is the great friend. He is also the most faithful friend. That is why people fight him so fiercely. They fight him like Don Quixote fought the windmills. Of course, to think of Time as something final is a fallacy. It is not final. It is only a tool with which to raise oneself into an infinite eternity. That eternity lies somewhere between noon and one o'clock in the afternoon, in some cases, sometimes, and in other cases at other times.

The first step is to realize. The second is to ask and expect. The third is to ask and not expect. The fourth is not to ask.

It becomes quite simple in the end. We climb up three steps and jump down one, and then we are at the top.

The top is breezy and blows away everything that is not rooted in it.

"Ah, yes, you love Yvonne," said Madelon.

"Nonsense," he said.

Madelon was lying in the hot sand, drawing circles and curves in the sand.

"Yes, you do," she said, and her dimples reflected the breeze at the top of the mountain—or the sea.

"I tell you I don't."

"You can't always study mathematics and take a scientific interest in life like the man who rushed to have a look at someone who had been knocked down by a bus and thought the curves on the body were symmetrical."

Madelon buried herself deeper into the sand until only her nose and mouth and eyes were visible.

"What will you do?" she asked through the sand.

"Yvonne asked me what *she* should do this morning."

*There* was the difference between the two, he thought.

"What did you tell her?"

"I didn't. We went back for lunch."

"Why?"

"What do you mean, why? In any case, one can never answer a question like that."

"No."

"Then why did you ask? I suppose I'll go back."

Madelon was looking at the water. It was rushing in like rocking horses with paper helmets.

"It's only a few hours. I can always return," he said again.

"And Yvonne?"

"What about Yvonne?"

"Well, what about her?"

"Oh, nothing. She'll get married. That's what she'll do."

They were coming in—Richard and Yvette and Pierre and . . . He closed his eyes and couldn't see the others.

"Shall we go to the hermit's garden to-day?" they said.



He could feel Madelon looking at him. Madelon was really good. Madelon was strangely good.

"Oh, yes, let's go to the hermit's garden," someone shouted.

"Yes, let's all go."

He rubbed his chin again. The spider was still there. What is not wanted is always there. Of course, the wall will remain even after the spider has gone. The hermit's garden alone remains—only the hermit is gone. Instead there is a long queue to get in. You pay at the desk and refreshments are provided inside. Also picture postcards. The hermit, meanwhile, has found the real address. Address it to: Between 12 and 1, and Time will deliver it. He is the best postman. You only need to address it properly and it gets there, even though the route is long and narrow like grey paper-string.

He smiled again. But that was not because of the hermit but because of the paper-string. You can fasten two coins to it (they have a hole in the middle), and hang it out of the window. In the evening. And when someone passes you lower the string a little so that the coins touch the pavement and whine like a lost fortune. And he who passes stops, and looks around, and stoops—but what he is really looking for is high above, not down below. It is always high above.

Yvonne laughed. She had quite a quiet laugh. It was dancing through the room sadly and dreaming. One had to strain one's ears to hear it. It was faint like the sound of the metal coins touching the pavement.

And the end, too, was the same. One evening, it was dark, of course, the concierge came with a big pair of scissors and cut off the lower end of the string (and kept it). And the string dangled in the air listlessly and impotently. Like a man in a lonely outpost when the postman (Time ?) has been killed on the way by a falling tree. Like

a man cutting the tape to open a new bridge. The tape stretches to breaking point and then it breaks, dividing into two and the two ends fall down and run away from each other. Between the two is a pool of water which fans out like the flames of an oilstove that has been lit in one place. The flames lick round the edge and creep along the sides, in a circle, and when they have surrounded everything they meet.

When they have surrounded everything . . . when they have cut off everything—with a big pair of scissors. He saw the scissors quite clearly. He was thinking of Yvonne—not Madelon.

"We are cut off," she said with terror in her voice.

"No, we aren't."

The water had rushed in with the speed of an army of galloping horsemen. The horses stood neck to neck round the rock. They stood almost motionless now.

This is the point: when are you cut off and when are you not cut off? And what are you cut off from?

The tomb overlooked the sea. The tomb was plain. The brown stone-slab had no inscription. The marble cross no name—not even that of Châteaubriand. And yet everyone knew. Like that tomb of Tolstoy.

So the answer is always the same—words or no words. But where is the tomb of Bach? No words—but the answer is still the same?

"Is *he* cut off?"

She answered, "What will grandfather think?"

"I don't know."

One cannot really know what others are thinking—whether they are dead or alive.

She was sitting on her knees and speaking to herself.

"You didn't answer my question," she said with a slight accent of defiance.

"Which one?"

"The one about what I should do."

"Get married," he said, chewing a blade of grass.

"Will you also get married when you have finished your studies?"

"I don't know."

"Madelon? She has such nice dimples."

"Yes, she has."

"Madelon?"

Then he remembered Madelon. He remembered her for five minutes. "Madelon?" he thought, "Madelon? No, she knows me too well. Too well? No, Madelon is good—too good . . ."

"No," he said, "Madelon is no good."

A sigh of relief broke the rising moon. The horsemen became bigger and blacker.

"Do you think we'll have to stay here all night?"

"How long is 'all night'?" he asked.

"How long is eternity?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

"On nothing."

"But grandfather—" she said.

"He isn't here."

"You know what I mean."

Undoubtedly—he wanted to see her white toes. When he was a child he always had those white toes when they were at the seaside in summer. But Yvonne now had white shoes. The white was too big. In her blond hair she had a red ribbon.

"Will you go back?" she asked.

"Where to?"

"To England."

"When I have finished my studies—perhaps."

"No, when war breaks out?"

He laughed. "Who told you?"

"I am just asking." And her voice was quiet again, like the night that night.

"Will you write to me?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Promise?"

He was sleepy. "Yes."

"When?"

He looked at his watch. His wrist watch had disappeared in the darkness. "I have lost it," he said.

"What?"

"Time."

"Never mind, it's the first of July. Promise to write on the first of July?"

"Yes."

"I must give you an address. But don't write home—for heaven's sake. If grandfather finds out . . ." The stars opened their eyes wide as she said it.

"Yes, give me that address."

"It's dark now. We shan't get back to-night."

"It doesn't matter."

"Are you afraid of being left alone?"

"But I am not alone."

"Is one ever alone?"

A sensible question. Was it Madelon?

"Among people, perhaps."

"I must tell you something," she whispered.

No, it was Yvonne. He fell asleep again.

"Will you promise not to tell anyone?"

"Yes."

She took a deep breath as if she were gathering strength. Across the air rumbled the sound of a cart on stone wheels.

"It's grandfather," she startled up. Her whole body trembled like the needless of a fir tree in the wind.

"You will no longer be alone," he said.

This was unkind, he thought. One is always unkind to

those who don't deserve it. They always get hurt. (But of this he thought much later.)

Her eyes were frightened. The grandfather's voice was hoarse. And she was silent as they rowed across the water. The rock stood lonely against a dark sky.

Was Châteaubriand cut off?

What was the secret that lived on her lips?

But who could say?

And he forgot.

Leslie came and with him came Betty. Betty was like an untamed horse that wanted to tame everybody else. Leslie was quite willing to be tamed. He was like Time—faithful, honest, and reliable. And to Betty he was like a tool.

The landlady was fat and all she needed was a mantilla to step out of a Spanish painting by Murillo. She looked at Betty and then at Leslie, and muttered, "This will do for you."

It was a big room with a double bed. Leslie choked and lost his speech as he turned red like the mantilla she was not wearing. Betty remained indifferent because she did not understand French.

Leslie said "No"—but he did not say it in a straight line.

"I'll put in a Spanish screen" (ah—that's the reason for the Spanish picture!), said the landlady.

He said, "It's an admirable idea," and enjoyed the idea.

But Leslie looked at him and then at Betty and then at the landlady, and said "No" again, and his voice quivered again though the word was short. But, of course, it never depends on the length of the word. The shortest are the longest.

"What time is it?" asked Leslie.

"Four o'clock."

"Tea," he said, and his tongue was hanging out. He had come from England that morning.

"And where is your Yvonne?" he asked.

"She left this morning."

"Oh, look," shouted Betty, and pointed with her finger into the air. The street was so narrow that you could almost touch the other side. It smelled of lobster and shellfish, or like those little black devils which you drag out of their shells with a pin. Everyone in the street had stopped and gazed at the sky. Above them a piece of furniture was being lifted through a window. Betty's mouth was wide open and wet. He thought of something, but then he thought of Leslie.

He dropped the thought and explained, "That's how they get the furniture into the rooms. Everything goes up that way."

"And does it also come down that way?" she asked.

"No, it always goes up only."

"Always?"

"No, I also saw it come down one. But that was different."

"How?"

"It was different."

"Oh, tell us—will you?"

"Well, it was rather narrow, long, and smooth. It was black and polished. And it slipped out and crashed down on the hobble-stones and the lid flew open and the dead skull got smashed to bits."

"How horrible!" she exclaimed, "You *would* tell us such things."

To this there is no answer.

What is dead always comes crashing down and dies. Faded lilac, withered faces, empty love. What goes up is always something else. It's only a question of trailing it upstairs, through the window, and of holding it tight and yet loosely. Tight and loose!

Something was missing. He did not know what it was, but it was something definite. He thought of Yvonne in

Rennes and of Leslie back in London ; of something above his head which seemed to go up—or to fall down.

But he did not think of Madelon. Of her he thought much later. When it was too late.

He knew it was only a few hours. But in those few hours the space between the arm and the wall on top of the wall became very wide—endlessly wide. He could no longer touch it.

He stretched his whole body, but it was hopeless. And just as he realized it the letter came. The letter came the same day as the old man died. (Which one of the two was dead ?) He was 86 and had shrunk like an apple. The old man knew nothing of anything. And the young man stood by as they put him (whom ?) into the coffin. In his hand he had crumbled up a piece of paper on which was written, "You are about to become a soldier," and he formed the smooth paper unto an uneven ball. And then he threw the ball away.

He did not know the difference. Did he know anything about nothing ? He only knew the pair of scissors. They were the biggest he had ever seen. They were so big that he could see nothing else besides them. He could not even see who used them. He could only hear the two blades meeting and grazing past each other, and then he could hear munching and crunching as if bones were being pulped down in a big china bowl. And then there was a lot of powder on the bottom of the bowl. And then there was . . .

Then there was the secret.

Of course, that secret.

"You had wanted to tell me something that night on the Grand Bé, Yvonne."

"I ?" The voice was coarse and abrupt.

"Yes, you—you are Yvonne, aren't you ?"

Was it Yvonne ? She looked old and haggard, and a

dirty boy was clutching her grey skirt. She was holding a baby in her arm and her body was round like a barrel.

"What d'you want here?" she asked with feet apart, ready to pounce like a watchdog.

If that was Yvonne—what did he want? he wondered. Surely not the secret? The secret is something fragile and transparent. The secret is something—secret. But two children and one to come . . .

"Well, what's the matter with you? Lost something?"

Ah, that was different. *Lost* something? he thought. I could tell you, he thought—not you but that other Yvonne. I could tell her quite clearly what I have lost—but I couldn't tell you.

"Well, then get out."

Obviously, the address was wrong. The address was Between 12 and 1? Take a lasso like the cowboys do in America, and throw it round 12 and 1 and then pull, pull hard, harder—somewhere between 12 and 1, at about half-past twelve to be exact, they are sure to meet. That's the exact spot where God lives.

The spider stirred. The wall moved. The devil was poking out his nose again from the breast-pocket.

He bent forward. His hand sneaked up to the man in the brown green gold-buttoned coat and seized the devil. He placed the devil in front of him on the table. The devil crossed his legs and shook his head and said, "Good morning."

"You aren't a devil, are you?"

"Oh, yes, I am."

"But quite a friendly one—aren't you?"

"Oh, quite a friendly one."

"Then can you tell me what God is?"

"A deathless time."

"And Time?"

"A timeless death."



"And Death?"

"A timeless time."

"And You?"

"A deathless death."

"Then you don't exist at all, do you?"

At that moment the man in the brown green gold-buttoned uniform turned round.

The young man in the brown battle dress jumped up and swept the devil away with a sweep of his hand.

A glass fell to the floor and made a noise like a voice that has lost its youth and had become rusty like a piece of iron.

"Sorry, sir!" he said, and his voice was no longer his own.

"Have you written that letter?" asked the officer.

The spider had disappeared from the wall.

Then he remembered. It was about the supply of more official CXZ 33/aj2 forms. He had not made a mistake in the date. It was the first of July.

But it was a different year.

The postman had been killed on the way by a falling tree.

#### POSTSCRIPT TO A LETTER TO ST. MALO

"Yes, I got your note. Many thanks. It was so small, I completely overlooked it. What surprised me most was that strangely small size. I remember it fascinated me so much that I forgot everything else.

"I received it as I was having dinner with Freddy at the Majorca. Freddy was less cynical than usual—rather sad which wasn't the real Freddy—you remember?—or it was *the* real Freddy (have you ever met him?). His uniform looked as if it hadn't been cleaned all those three years and two buttons were missing, and the edges of the trousers were worn out. (Actually he was in civvies, I believe, but it had all become the same, the face and the uniform, and the suit looked exactly the three years it hadn't been worn.)

"He was speaking and said something, and the lighting on the wall was queer. Do you remember that café—not the Russian one—the one with the green and red lights? The lighting came out in rays and illuminated parts and kept others black. And through the yellow came red waves which were static but not stagnant. Something was not alive but it wasn't dead. Freddy said something—obviously it was *the* thing, and then I got your note. I felt rather uncomfortable receiving it at that moment, and immediately a feeling of guilt took possession of me. Had I written *sur le champs* I could have analysed it, but we drank some wine—it was a blessing we did! though I forget what it was, as Freddy had selected it—and I poured down the guilt with the wine.

"Will you forgive me?"

"Of course, the guilt doesn't stay down with the wine. That is why it is Guilt. But some decision had to be made. It was either the one or the other. I didn't realize the third then, but I felt it did not exist. The third comes indirectly—that's the trouble. I knew it would hurt you, but I hoped it would only be a momentary pain. Did it last very long? Incidentally, when yours passed, mine began. But that is a different story and I shan't bore you with that one now. It might become a book, and in any case it's quite useless. One must bear one's pain alone.

"Did it hurt very much? But you must remember that only those things can hurt which were done with the intention of hurting. And you must believe me when I say that this was not my intention. It was the inevitable choice of something within you either growing and bursting out (killing you in the process), or of that something drying up and sticking to your inerts like a wet rag (and you would be carrying death with you all the time). What a choice! I couldn't help it. The best would have been never to have been born.

“ Or to have come across that path after it had burst forth and perhaps the rupture could have been mended ? But that’s too late now and the essential thing in life is to have no regrets. Then pain will yet turn to joy—some-where high above. Inevitably.

“ Now I remember quite clearly your note. It came at Christmas time. That’s why it was so small perhaps ? It had three sentences—am I right ? The first had three words, the second four, and the last three again. No, I shan’t, in answer to the last. But I suppose you have by now—have you ?

“ Should you ever come across Yvonne, give her my love. She was such a child.”

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY. MARGIAD EVANS. Blackwell.  
8s. 6d.

I THINK TIME will prove this book a classic, a never-to-be-forgotten contribution to our literature. I make no claim for it as a masterpiece (which would bring it down to the two or three a week class), but, within the perils of prophecy, it will never lack a choice and discriminating audience for whom *Autobiography* and *The Story of My Heart* will be the two best books of their kind within the century. Readers of *Life and Letters To-day* are already conversant with several of its chapters, which have appeared in various numbers since March, 1940, and so will be prepared for my praise of Miss Margiad Evans' prose style, her almost unparalleled clarity of observation and description, and the power of communicated experience which links its readers to this "record of my gravest (that is happiest) inner existence". For *Autobiography* is concerned hardly at all with the external bustle of events and personalities which for most of us is life. "All day I have harassed myself with senseless bustling: it was as if a high gale rattled my bones . . . Shouldn't I be sad resting here if I believed that I didn't form part of universal creation in the same way as all things? . . . I believe all creation, all life whatever to be a oneness. . . . Which of us cannot remember an ivy tendril swaying, the shadow of a bramble spray, grass, a small creeping bird, and felt *seeing* the memory, *there* was their own land, their own country? . . . Lying on the grass in the still valleys, in the dark watching the rising and wheeling overhead of the great night suns, drinking the vivid clearness of the evening, sinking the shoulders under the clear cold water—floating, lying, standing, moving with life—I have become feeling itself. My simple being is thought. It was not necessary to learn anything, neither to name the stars nor distinguish the plants. I just could not

be myself without them. They are to me portions of my body—my greater being. Why do I write this now? Because it is this great life which is steadfast. Being and touching and seeing. Lying on the grass. Feeling your senses transposed to the things you see, watching your soul's delight take form and shape in the fields and the woods, mountains and clouds."

The record of this "being and touching and seeing" is altogether beautiful. We are to judge, from many fraught passages, that it cost the author much toil and pain. How often she deplores the lag between experience and its expression, the poignant inadequacy of words—"but without words what may be testified?" I again resort to quotation: "If you want to write with absolute truth and with the ease of a natural function, write from your eyes and ears, and your touch, in the very now where you find yourself alive wherever it may be. Carry your paper and book with you and conceal yourself in the fields. Watch and *be* in what you see or in what you feel in your brain. There is no substitute even in divine imagination for the touch of the moment, the touch of the daylight on the dream. . . . Watch the hedgerow, the bank with its dusky gaps, the lane, watch how a breeze is moving all the stillness like a wave towards you. Do you think that movement will come back when the paper is spread out for you to write? No: it never will." Maybe this is the unique quality of her writing, this writing in the Now: I am sure she has gone as far as any writer whatsoever in making the reader identify himself with her own experience in and of the living world of birds and beasts and plants and earth and air and water.

*Autobiography* is slow reading; one savours and absorbs words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs. The images, the communion, are as vivid physically as mentally. There can be no hurrying on. If one has not time to surrender to and

share the image and the communion there can, indeed, be little purpose in reading a book so rare and perfect as this.

GWYN JONES

DOUBLE LIVES. WILLIAM PLOMER. Jonathan Cape.  
9s. 6d.

THE FACILITY WITH which Mr. Plomer has previously written about foreign countries and his appreciation of foreign character become more understandable on reading this autobiography of the first twenty-five years of his life. His youth and early manhood were spent chiefly in South Africa and Japan; the former because his parents had settled there, the latter quite fortuitously.

This book deals largely with these two countries, although life in England features also in its pages, and naturally enough, considering that the Plomers traced their descent from a long line of landed gentry—a fact which clearly explains the pleasant, aristocratic style of the author's writing.

Without being precocious, Mr. Plomer was "old for his age", and this has increased the interest of his book, since he began to observe and reason when he was still a boy. Indeed, at a very early age "there came a rush of sensuous experience. Like shots in an exquisite film or phases in a memorable dream, I recall a growing and a shining world that could be touched and heard and smelt as well as seen".

Mr. Plomer's command of language is extensive. He is imaginative but can also be precise. There are only occasional lapses into what may be called vulgarisms; I dislike the expression "One So-and-So". He writes, "At Bath he was housed with one William." Very occasionally he is a little careless: "Whose khaki uniforms contrasted with blue distances and the biscuit-coloured landscapes." Certainly with the blue distances, but

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certainly not with the biscuit-coloured landscapes, from which for protective reasons the uniform was derived.

But it would be ungrateful to dwell on such small points when the book is so full of interest and wit—certain descriptions and anecdotes are beyond praise.

The major characters in this book, the author's parents and friends, are brought into high relief, but other characters such as the residents at a boarding-house in Eastbourne, come to life if only in a few sentences.

There are an interesting description of the Jameson Raid, a miniature sketch of Kruger and a few remarkable lines on Van Gogh, which Mr. Plomer had collected from his relations.

The author ends his twenty-five years in Japan, where he spent three years living among the Japanese and finding them sympathetic, although not sparing his criticism of certain sides of their national character which at present appear to be uppermost.

DAVID HORNER

ELISABET NEY. JAN FORTUNE and JOAN BURTON.

Harrap. 10s. 6d.

THIS BIOGRAPHY OF Elisabet Ney, though flamboyant, makes sober reading. It is unpleasant to see how far human stupidity can pervert character and prevent the development of creative genius. I am concerned less with the astonishing aspects of the story, and the Texan part at least suggests a page from Lautréamont, than with this record of a woman's fight to be allowed to work. I heard something of the struggle from those of a subsequent generation, women now forgotten but who made possible our present victory, for without women we could not have won this war. To become a sculptor and break conventional moulds of behaviour, Elisabet had to develop the quality that seems like selfishness and jars to-day, but





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we should remember the conditions of the time, understand rather than condemn. It is a long way from the child who was forbidden to learn anatomy to the girls now on the gun sites, and every step has had to be contested, with little glory and usually against the full tide of public opinion.

One of the biographers, Miss Burton, will be remembered for her amusing study of Sir Richard Burton's Wife. Isabel and Elisabeth have much in common, perhaps the early nineteenth century produced such types to reflect it? This book is written in a witty and impersonal manner, but it would have been more valuable if some of the psychological aspects of the subject had been examined in more detail.

BRYHER

THREE AGAINST ROMMEL. ALEXANDER CLIFFORD.  
Harrap. 12s. 6d.

MILITARY HISTORY IS usually a matter of statistics and decisions. The cards are turned up on the table by the master players of both sides, and battles are made to produce theories for the professional soldiers of the future to study. But military history is not normally a subject of engaging interest to the ordinary peace-loving Briton.

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Mr. Clifford was with the Eighth Army from its early beginning as a tiny force under General Wavell, in 1940. Except for brief periods in towns behind the lines, a trip to Greece, a leave to England, and a few days attached to the R.A.F. in Tunisia, he was with the Eighth Army until

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the end of the campaign. He lived with them in the desert, and he gives us a strong flavour of their spirit, their courage, and their often wretched living conditions. Between the lines, it is apparent that the way of a War Correspondent was frequently hard. Difficulties in communications often meant going back over a hundred miles with a "story". It says a lot for the tenacity of Mr. Clifford that he saw so much of these North African battles and captured towns.

Not the least important thing about this book is that it presents a careful account of the fall of Tobruk. Here, the facts are firm. The half-spoken aspersions and the loudly-voiced criticisms of General Klopper and his brave little force, are routed for good.

The book is not without its faults. Here and there, the writing becomes loose; now and again Mr. Clifford forgets his normal modesty; and, on occasions, having told us that bloody conflict was raging within a few miles of him, he treats us to a description of his meal or his reflections before falling asleep. But these are small blemishes; the book succeeds. It is the most human, vivid story of what happened in North Africa that is likely to be written for a long time to come. And although a future campaign in Europe must inevitably dwarf the battles of the Eighth and First Armies in magnitude, their North Africa achievement is finally summed up in the last sentence of Mr. Clifford's book—"It was a very great victory." It was: and this book is a worthy chronicle of that victory.

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ostensibly leading figure, but the main character to emerge clearly is that of the author himself. Others mentioned, at greater or less length, are Violet Hunt, Mary Butts, Kipling, and Conrad.

H. K. FISHER

ENGLISH DIARIES AND JOURNALS. KATE O'BRIEN.  
Collins. 5s.

MR. AGATE, no doubt, would disagree with the author's thesis that "the best English diaries have been written by bores", even though its resolution is that the diarists would "probably have been bores if they had not kept diaries". Nevertheless, it is precisely Miss O'Brien's handling of her thesis that gives the book its particular charm. It is far more than an accomplished catalogue of our most famous diarists from Sir William Dugdale to Queen Victoria and those of our own day, for, says the author, "I take my task to be the pleasant one of discussing my own preferences and dislikes among diarists rather than gravely and detachedly to compose a concise history". So she confesses her boredom with Evelyn, Pepys, and "the pettifogging parsons" (Kilvert excepted) and delights us instead with shrewd comments on George Fox, Fanny Burney, Henry Crabb Robinson, William Barbellion, and Katharine Mansfield. Among a host of others, stand out Captain Scott and the little-known Miss Weeton. Thus, not only are the diaries turned over for us, but all are illuminated by what is often the uncanny analysis to which the author subjects them. Miss O'Brien *knows*, we feel, and so we rise from the book with our memories refreshed and also with minds relieved that the place and purpose of diary-keeping has been so aptly and affectionately resolved.

TREVOR JAMES

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

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MARCH

## POEM

1944

by

EDITH SITWELL

“LO, THIS IS SHE THAT WAS THE  
WORLD’S DESIRE”

IN THE GREEN winter night  
That is dark as the cypress bough, the pine,  
The fig-tree and the vine,  
When our long sun into the dark had set  
And made but winter branches of his rays  
The heart, a ghost,  
Said to our life farewell—the shadow leaves  
The body when our long dark sun has gone

And this is the winter’s Aethiopian clime,  
Darkening all beauty . . . .

In the winter night,

The seed of the fire  
Fallen from the long-leaved planets is of gold—  
But she is old  
And no more loved by the stars. . . . O now no more  
The gold kiss of Orion burns her cheek !

Grey dust bent over the fire in the winter night . . . .  
Was this the crone that once Adonis loved,





Seeing the ancient wrinkled shadow-shape  
If this be long-dead Venus, or the Ape

Our great precursor. . . .

I felt pity for the dust,  
And Time, the earth from which our beauty grows  
—The old unchanging memory of the bone  
That porphyry whence grew the summer rose.

For when spring comes, the dew with golden foot  
Will touch to life the hidden leaf, the wrinkled root—

Then the grey dust that was the world's desire  
Will sigh "Once I was wild and blind  
In my desires as the snow. I loved where I list

And was violent like spring roots. . . . O might I feel again  
The violence, the uproar of bursting buds, the wild-beast  
fire

Of spring in my veins—and know again the kiss  
That holds all the spring redness and the rose that weeps  
in the blood—  
O might I know but this !

# OF ART AND THE FUTURE

By HENRY MILLER

TO MOST MEN the past is never yesterday, or five minutes ago, but distant, misty epochs some of which are glorious and others abominable. Each one reconstructs the past according to his temperament and experience. We read history to corroborate our own views, not to learn what scholars think to be true. About the future there is as little agreement as about the past, I've noticed. We stand in relation to the past very much like the cow in the meadow—endlessly chewing the cud. It is not something finished and done with, as we sometimes fondly imagine, but something alive, constantly changing, and perpetually with us. But the future too is with us perpetually, and alive and constantly changing. The difference between the two, a thoroughly fictive one, incidentally, is that the future we create whereas the past can only be recreated. As for that constantly vanishing point called the present, that fulcrum which melts simultaneously into past and future, only those who deal with the eternal know and live in it, acknowledging it to be all.

At this moment, when almost the entire world is engaged in war, the plight of a few artists—for we never have more than a handful, it seems—appears to be a matter of the utmost unimportance. At the outbreak of the war art was by universal agreement at a perilously low ebb. So was life, one might say. The artist, always in advance of his time, could register nothing but death and destruction. The normal ones, i.e. the unfeeling, unthinking ones, regarded the art products of their time as morbid, perverse, and meaningless. Just because the political picture was so black they demanded of their hirelings that they paint something bright and pleasing. Now all are bogged down, those who saw and those who did not, and what the future contains

is dependent on that very creative quality which unfortunately only seems vital in times of destruction. Now everyone is exhorted to be creative—with gun in hand.

To every man fighting to bring the war to a victorious end the result of the conflict calls up a different picture. To resume life where one left off is undoubtedly the deepest wish of those now participating in the holocaust. It is here that the greatest disillusionment will occur. To think of it descriptively we have to think of a man jumping off a precipice, escaping miraculously from certain death and then, as he starts to climb back, suddenly discovering that the whole mountain side has collapsed. The world we knew before September, 1939, is collapsing hour by hour. It had been collapsing long before that, but we were not so aware of it, most of us. Paris, Berlin, Prague, Amsterdam, Rome, London, New York—they may still be standing when peace is declared, but it will be as though they did not exist. The cultural world in which we swam, not very gracefully, to be sure, is fast disappearing. The cultural era of Europe, and that includes America, is finished. The next era belongs to the technician; the day of the mind machine is dawning. God pity us!

Taking a rough, uncritical view of history we realize at a glance that in every stage of civilization the condition of the common man has been anything but civilized. He has lived like a rat—through good epochs and bad ones. History was never written for the common man, but for those in power. The history of the world is the history of a privileged few. Even in its grandeur it stinks.

We are not suddenly going to turn a new page with the cessation of this fratricidal war. Another wretched peace will be made, never fear, and there will be another breathing spell of ten or twenty years, and then we shall go to war again. And the next war will also be regarded as a just and holy war, as is this one now. But whatever the reason

for or nature of the coming war, it will no more resemble this one than this one resembles the previous one which, significantly enough, we speak of as "World War No. 1". In the future we shall have only "world wars"—that much is already clear.

With total wars a new element creeps into the picture. From now on every one is involved, without exception. What Napoleon began with the sword, and Balzac boasted he would finish with the pen, is actually going to be carried through by the collaboration of the whole wide world, including the primitive races whom we study and exploit shamelessly and ruthlessly. As war spreads wider and wider so will peace sink deeper and deeper into the hearts of men. If we must fight more whole-heartedly we shall also be obliged to live more whole-heartedly. If the new kind of warfare demands that everybody and everything under the sun be taken cognizance of, so will the new kind of peace. Not to be able to be of service will be unthinkable. It will constitute the highest treason, probably punishable by death. Or perhaps a more ignominious end awaits the unfit and unserviceable: in lieu of becoming cannon fodder they may become just fodder.

The first world war ushered in the idea of a league of nations, an international court of arbitration. It failed because there was no real solidarity among the so-called nations, most of them being only cats' paws. This war will bring about the realization that the nations of the earth are made up of individuals, not masses. The common man will be the new factor in the world-wide collective mania which will sweep the earth.

The date most commonly agreed upon (by professional prophets) for the end of this war is the Fall of 1947. But by 1944 it is quite possible that the war will assume its true aspect, that of world-wide revolution. It will get out of the control of those now leading "the masses" to

slaughter. The masses will slaughter in their own fashion for a while. The collapse of Germany and Italy will precipitate the debacle, thereby creating a rift between the British and American peoples, for England (her men of power) is still more fearful of a Russian victory than of a German defeat. France has still to play her true role. Fired by the success of the Soviets, she will overleap all bounds, and, just as in the French Revolution, amaze the world by her spirit and vitality. There will be more blood shed in France than in any other part of Europe before a quietus is established.

An era of chaos and confusion, beginning in 1944, will continue until almost 1960. All boundaries will be broken down, class lines obliterated, and money become worthless. It will be a caricature of the Marxian Utopia. The world will be enthralled by the ever-unfolding prospects seeming to offer nothing but good. Then suddenly it will be like the end of a debauch. A protracted state of *Katzenjammer* will set in. Then commences the real work of consolidation, when Europe gets set to meet the Asiatic invasion, due about the turn of the century. For, with the culmination of this war, China and India will play a most prominent and important part in world affairs. We have roused them from their lethargy and we shall pay for having awakened them. The East and the West *will* meet one day—in a series of death-like embraces.<sup>1</sup> After that the barriers between peoples and races will break down and the melting-pot (which America only pretends to be) will become an actuality. Then, and only then, will the embryonic man of the new order appear, the man who has no feeling of class, caste, colour, or country, the man who has no need of possessions, no use for money, no archaic prejudices about the sanctity of the home or of marriage with its

<sup>1</sup> The present strife with Japan is more a clash of rivals than of genuine antagonists. But it serves to damage irreparably our unwarranted prestige in the East.

accompanying tread-mill of divorce. A totally new conception of individuality will be born, one in which the collective life is the dominant note. In short, for the first time since the dawn of history, men will serve one another, first out of an enlightened self-interest, and finally out of a greater conception of love.

The distinctive feature of this "epoch of the threshold", so to speak, will be its visionary-realistic quality. It will be an era of realization, accomplishment, and vision. It will create deeper, more insoluble problems than ever existed before. Immense horizons will open up, dazzling and frightening ones. The ensuing conflicts will assume more and more the character of clashes between wizards, making our wars appear puny and trifling by comparison. The white and the black forces will come out in the open. Antagonisms will be conscious and deliberate, engaged in joyously and triumphantly, and to the bitter end. The schisms will occur not between blocs of nations or peoples, but between two divergent elements, both clear-cut and highly aware of their goals, and the line between them will be as wavering as the flow of the zodiacal signs about the ecliptic. The problem for the next few thousand years will be one of power, power in the abstract and ultimate. Men will be drunk with power, having unlocked the forces of the earth in ways now only dimly apprehended. The consolidation of the new individuality, rooted in the collective (man no longer worshipping the Father but acknowledging sources of power greater than the Sun) will dissolve the haunting problem of power. A dynamic equilibrium, based upon the recognition of a new creative centre, will establish itself, permitting the free play of all the fluid, potent forces locked within the human corpus. Then it may be possible to look forward to the dawn of what has already been described as "The Age of Plenitude".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Title of Dane Rudhyar's new and as yet unpublished book.

Before the present conflict is terminated it is altogether likely that we shall see unleashed the deadly secret weapon so often hinted at on all sides. At the very beginning of the war I described (in an unpublished book on America) the ironic possibilities which the discovery and use of a deadly "human flit" would entail. The ambivalent attitude of dread and ridicule which this idea generally elicits is significant. It means that the inconceivable and unconscionable has already become a dire possibility. That the men of science will be coerced into yielding up the secret now in their possession I have no doubt. If the Japanese can unblushingly carry on their programme of systematically doping their victims it is not at all unthinkable that we on our side will come forth with an even more effective, certainly a more drastic and immediate, weapon of destruction. All the rules of warfare which have hitherto obtained are destined to be smashed and relegated to the scrap-heap. This is merely a corollary to the dissolution of the Hague Tribunal, the Maginot Line, and all our fond conceptions of peace, justice, and security. It is not that we have become more brutal and cynical, more ruthless and immoral—it is that ever since the last war we are consciously or unconsciously (probably both) making war upon war. The present methods of making war are too ineffectual, too protracted, too costly in every sense. All that impedes us thus far is the lack of imaginative leaders. The common people are far more logical, ruthless, and totalitarian in spirit than the military and political cliques. Hitler, for all that has been said against him, is hardly the brilliant imaginative demon we credit him with being. He merely served to unleash the dark forces which we tried to pretend did not exist. With Hitler, Pluto came out into the open. In England and America we have far more realistic, far more ruthless, types. All that deters them is fear of consequences: they are obsessed by the image of

the boomerang. It is their habit to act obliquely, shame-facedly, with guilty consciences. But this conscience is now being broken down, giving way to something vastly different, to what it was originally, what the Greeks called *syneidesis*. Once a deep vision of the future opens up, these types will proceed with the directness and remorselessness of monomaniacs.

The problem of power, what to do with it, how to use it, who shall wield it or not wield it, will assume proportions heretofore unthinkable. We are moving into the realm of incalculables and imponderables in our everyday life, just as for the last few generations we have been accustoming ourselves to this realm through the play of thought. Everything is coming to fruition, and the harvest will be brilliant and terrifying. To those who look upon such predictions as fantastic I have merely to point out, ask them to imagine, what would happen should we ever unlock the secret patents now hidden in the vaults of our unscrupulous exploiters. Once the present crazy system of exploitation crumbles, and it is crumbling hourly, the powers of the imagination, heretofore stifled and fettered, will run riot. The face of the earth can be changed utterly overnight once we have the courage to concretize the dreams of our inventive geniuses. Never was there such a plenitude of inventors as in this age of destruction. And there is one thing to bear in mind about the man of genius—even the inventor—usually he is on the side of humanity, not the devil. It has been the crowning shame of this age to have exploited the man of genius for sinister ends. But such a procedure always acts as a boomerang: ultimately the man of genius always has his revenge.

Within the next fifteen years, when the grand clean-up goes into effect, the man of genius will do more to liberate the fettered sleeping giants than was ever done in the whole history of man. There will be strange new offices,



strange new powers, strange new rules. It will seem for a while as though everything were topsy-turvy, and so it *will* be, regarded from to-day's vantage point. What is now at the bottom will come to the top, and vice versa. The world has literally been standing on its head for thousands of years. So great has been the pressure from above that a hole has been bored through the very stuff of consciousness. Into the empty vessel of life the waters are now pouring. The predatory few, who sought to arrange life in their own vulpine terms, will be the first to be drowned. "The few," I say, but in all truth they are legion. The floods of destruction sweep high and low; we are all part and parcel of the same mould; we have all been abetting the crime of man against man. The type of man we represent will be drowned out utterly. A new type will arise, out of the dregs of the old. That is why the stirring of sleepy Asia is fraught with such fateful consequences for the man of Europe, or shall I say, the man of the Western world. The clash of East and West will be like a marriage of the waters; when the new dry land eventually appears the old and the new will be indistinguishable.

The human fundament is in the East. We have talked breathlessly about equality and democracy without ever facing the reality of it. We shall have to take these despised and neglected ones to our bosom, melt into them, absorb their anguish and misery. We cannot have a real brotherhood so long as we cherish the illusion of racial superiority, so long as we fear the touch of yellow, brown, black, or red skins. We in America will have to begin by embracing the Negro, the Indian, the Mexican, the Filipino, all those Untouchables whom we so blithely dismiss from our consciousness by pointing to our Bills of Rights. We have not even begun to put the Emancipation Proclamation into effect. The same is true, of course, for England, for imperialist Holland, and colonial France. Russia took the

first genuine steps in this direction, and Russia, nobody will dispute, has certainly not been weakened by carrying out her resolution to the letter.

And now, what about Art? What is the place and the future of art in all this turmoil? Well, in the first place, it seems to me that what we have hitherto known as art will be non-existent. Oh yes, we will continue to have novels and paintings and symphonies and statues, we will even have verse, no doubt about it. But all this will be as a hang-over from other days, a continuation of a bad dream which ends only with a full awakening. The cultural era is past. The new civilization, which may take centuries or a few thousand years to usher in, will not be *another* civilization—it will be the open stretch of realization which all the past civilizations have pointed to. The city, which was the birthplace of civilization, such as we know it to be, will exist no more. There will be nuclei of course, but they will be mobile and fluid. The peoples of the earth will no longer be shut off from one another within states, but will flow freely over the surface of the earth and intermingle. There will be no fixed constellations of human aggregates. Governments will give way to management, using the word in a broad sense. The politician will become as superannuated as the dodo bird. The machine will never be dominated, as some imagine; it will be scrapped, eventually, but not before men have understood the nature of the mystery which binds them to their creation. The worship, investigation, and subjugation of the machine will give way to the lure of all that is truly occult. This problem is bound up with the larger one of power—and of possession. Man will be forced to realize that power must be kept open, fluid, and free. His aim will be not to possess power but to radiate it.

At the root of the art instinct is this desire for power—vicarious power. The artist is situated hierarchically

between the hero and the saint. These three types rule the world, and it is difficult to say which wields the greatest power. But none of them are what might be called adepts. The adept is the power behind the powers, so to speak. He remains anonymous, the secret force from which the suns derive their power and glory.

To put it quite simply, art is only a stepping-stone to reality; it is the vestibule in which we undergo the rites of initiation. Man's task is to make of himself a work of art. The creations which man makes manifest have no validity in themselves; they serve to awaken, that is all. And that, of course, is a great deal. But it is not the all. Once awakened, everything will reveal itself to man as creation. Once the blinkers have been removed and the fetters unshackled, man will have no need to recreate through the elect cult of genius. Genius will be the norm.

Throughout history the artist has been the martyr, immolating himself in his work. The very phrase, "a work of art," gives off a perfume of sweat and agony. Divine creation, on the other hand, bears no such connotation. We do not think of sweat and tears in connection with the creation of the universe; we think of joy and light, and above all of play. The agony of a Christ on Calvary, on the other hand, illustrates superbly the ordeal which even a Master must undergo in the creation of a perfect life.

In a few hundred years or less books will be a thing of the past. There was a time when poets communicated with the world without the medium of print; the time will come when they will communicate silently, not as poets merely, but as seers. What we have overlooked, in our frenzy to invent more dazzling ways and means of communication, is to communicate. The artist lumbers along with crude implements. He is only a notch above his predecessor, the cave man. Even the film art, requiring the

services of veritable armies of technicians, is only giving us shadow plays, old almost as man himself.

No, the advance will not come through the aid of subtler mechanical devices, nor will it come through the spread of education. The advance will come in the form of a break through. New forms of communication will be established. New forms presuppose new desires. The great desire of the world to-day is to break the bonds which lock us in. It is not yet a conscious desire. Men do not yet realize what they are fighting for. This is the beginning of a long fight, a fight from within outwards. It may be that the present war will be fought entirely in the dark. It may be that the revolution ensuing will envelop us in even greater darkness. But even in the blackest night it will be a joy and a boon to know that we are touching hands around the world. That has never happened before. We can touch and speak and pray in utter darkness. And we can wait for the dawn—no matter how long—provided we all wait together.

The years immediately ahead of us will be a false dawn, that is my belief. We cannot demolish our educational, legal, and economic pediments overnight, nor even our phony religious superstructures. Until these are completely overthrown there is not much hope of a new order. From birth we live in a web of chaos in which all is illusion and delusion. The leaders who now and then arise, by what miracle no one knows, these leaders who come forward expressly to lead us out of the wilderness, are nearly always crucified. This happens on both sides of the fence, not just in the domain of Axis tyrants. It can happen in Soviet Russia, too, as we know. And it happens in a less spectacular but all the more poisonous, insidious way in the United States, "home of the brave and land of the free." It is idle to blame individuals, or even classes of society. Given the educational, legal, economic, and religious background of

the cultural nations of this day, the results are inevitable. The savagery of a Céline is like the prattle of a child to those who can look into the heart of things with naked eye. Often, when I listen to the radio, to a speech by one of our politicians, to a sermon by one of our religious maniacs, to a discourse by one of our eminent scholars, to an appeal by one of our men of good will, to the propaganda dinped into us night and day by the advertising fiends, I wonder what the men of the coming century would think could they listen in for just one evening.

I do not believe that this repetitious cycle of insanity which is called history will continue forever. I believe there will be a great break-through—within the next few centuries. I think that what we are heralding as the Age of Technic will be nothing more than a transition period, as was the Renaissance. We will need, to be sure, all our technical knowledge and skill to settle once and for all the problem of securing to every man, woman and child the fundamental necessities. We will make a drastic revision, it also goes without saying, of our notion of necessities, which is an altogether crude and primitive one. With the concomitant emancipation of woman, entailed by this great change, the awakening of the love instinct will transform every domain of life. The era of neuters is drawing to a close. With the establishment of a new and vital polarity we shall witness the birth of male-and-female in every individual. What then portends in the realm of art is truly unthinkable. Our art has been masculine through and through, that is to say, lop-sided. It has been vitiated by the unacknowledged feminine principle. This is as true of ancient as of modern art. The tyrannical, subterranean power of the female must come to an end. Men have paid a heavy tribute for their seeming subjugation of the female.

If we dare to imagine a solution of these seemingly fixed

problems, dare to imagine an end of perhaps ten thousand years of pseudo-civilization, dare to imagine a change as radical as from the Stone Age to the Age of Electricity, let us say, for in the future we will not advance slowly step by step as in the past, but with the rush of the whirlwind, then who can say what forms of expression art will assume? Myself I cannot see the persistence of the artist type. I see no need for the individual man of genius in such an order. I see no need for martyrs. I see no need for vicarious atonement. I see no need for the fierce preservation of beauty on the part of a few. Beauty and Truth do not need defenders, nor even expounders. No one will ever have a lien on Beauty or Truth; they are creations in which all participate. They need only to be apprehended; they exist eternally. Certainly, when we think of the conflicts and schisms which occur in the realm of art, we know that they do not proceed out of love of Beauty or Truth. Ego worship is the one and only cause of dissension, in art as in other realms. The artist is never defending art, but simply his own petty conception of art. Art is as deep and high and wide as the universe. There is nothing but art, if you look at it properly. It is almost banal to say so yet it needs to be stressed continually: all is creation, all is change, all is flux, all is metamorphosis. But how many deeply and sincerely believe that? Are we not devotees of the static? Are we not always on the defensive? Are we not always trying to circumscribe, erect barriers, set up tabus? Are we not always preparing for war? Are we not always in the grip of "fear and trembling"? Are we not always sanctifying, idolizing, martyrizing, proselytizing? What a pitiful, ignominious spiritual shambles, these last ten thousand years! *Civilized*, we say. What a horrible word! What bedeviled idiocy skulks behind that arrogant mask! Oh, I am not thinking of this war, nor of the last one, nor of any or all

the wars that men have waged in the name of *Civilization*. I am thinking of the periods in between, the rotten, stagnant eras of peace, the lapses and relapses, the lizard-like sloth, the creepy mole-like burrowing in, the fungus growths, the barnacles, the stink-weeds; I am thinking of the constant fanatical dervish dance that goes on in the name of all that is unreal, unholy, and unattainable, thinking of the sadistic-masochistic tug-of-war, now one getting the upper hand, now the other. In the name of humanity when will we cry *Enough!*

There are limits to everything, and so I believe there is a limit to human stupidity and cruelty. But we are not yet there. We have not yet drained the bitter cup. Perhaps only when we have become full-fledged monsters will we recognize the angel in man. Then, when the ambivalence is clear, may we look forward with confidence to the emergence of a new type of man, a man as different from the man of to-day as we are from the *pithecanthropus erectus*. Nor is this too much to hope for, even at this remote distance. There have been precursors. Men have walked this earth who, for all they resemble us, may well have come from another planet. They have appeared singly and far apart. But to-morrow they may come in clusters, and the day after in hordes. The birth of Man follows closely the birth of the heavens. A new star never makes its appearance alone. With the birth of a new type of man a current is set in motion which later enables us to perceive that he was merely the foam on the crest of a mighty wave.

I have a strange feeling that the next great impersonation of the future will be a woman. If it is a greater reality we are veering towards then it must be woman who points the way. The masculine hegemony is over. Men have lost touch with the earth; they are clinging to the window-panes of their unreal superstructures like blind bats lashed

by the storms of oceanic depths. Their world of abstractions spells babble.

When men are at last united in darkness woman will once again illumine the way—by revealing the beauties and mysteries which enfold us. We have tried to hide from our sight the womb of night, and now we are engulfed in it. We have pretended to be single when we were dual, and now we are frustrate and impotent. We shall come forth from the womb united, or not at all. Come forth not in brotherhood, but in brotherhood and sisterhood, as man and wife, as male and female. Failing we shall perish and rot in the bowels of the earth, and time pass us by ceaselessly and remorselessly.

### ALLOW SILK BIRDS THAT SEE

Allow the local morning make fire.  
Silk bars the road, a spider rope.  
Birds trail the slippery harbourer  
That steers from what eye builds its blinder deep.

See light on man devise the best collision.  
See man on word devise the best collision.

Now call the newt with river eyes.  
Call brook and girl, the bower sunshine.  
And call each drop. The early boys  
See word on God devise the best collision.

W. S. GRAHAM



## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

By ROBERT HERRING

IN THIS PAPER we have always stood out against the present tendency to discuss the future only in terms of material security, understandable as that may be. To understand a thing, however, is not necessarily to like it better and, if there is to be a future, one must insist on account being taken of that for man's spirit as well.

This is why I have printed, on immediately preceding pages, an essay which embraces far more than its title, *Of Art and the Future*—and with the more pleasure, since its author, Henry Miller, is an old correspondent with whom certain factors in his earlier style did not previously enable us to see eye to eye on proposed contributions. My eye is still not entirely aligned, but this time it is with regard to some of the matter; which I propose to discuss. It should be taken as sign of pleasurable agreement on the main issues that I am stirred to discussion. At the same time, there is that with which I do not agree or—which is more separating—with which I only partly agree.

To explain why, not only to the author but to other readers across the Atlantic, I must at the outset confess to a feeling that Americans, and American intellectuals especially, show signs of becoming—for them, strangely—old-fashioned. We have for the first time seen them instead of countering European trends, adopting our own cast-off styles, schools, movements; more than adopting, “discovering” them. (It will be noticed that we have not of late printed so many American contributions as were a feature in our issues before the war.) When it comes to viewing present problems, I notice many Americans miss half the problem by ignoring fundamental changes in the other half—which includes ourselves. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that we have changed, or shall we say that much is in the ascendant that to others

for long had seemed retrograde? Always an arrogant race, though how subtly! now (as far as mankind can be anything but penitentially ashamed) we are proud as well. We are proud because we have done something no one else has, nor tried to, nor been willing to try. And just as a woman pushes her pram into oncoming traffic while she makes up her mind whether to cross the road, so we, blocking the way with our island, ironic "perfidious Albion", ensured time for others to make up their minds—and their quarrels. We are grateful for the help, in Miller's phrase "the enlightened self-interest", which has come to our aid, but we know we deserve it, and we are in no mood to be told that in the new world we are to continue to be half-starved, to do without this and to give up that. It will be unwise for others to tell us what they feel about India, the British Empire or any other Aunt Sally, which is so harmless compared to certain big "interests", until others take the trouble to find out what we feel about them, ourselves, and about us, our Service men, our civilians, our conscripted youth of both sexes. To listen, in fact, as well as to "tell the world". We, ourselves, have never been good at "telling the world", but we shall be even worse after the war at being "told". And that must be recognized... Such generalities are expressed, I hope courteously, in order that our approach may be understood. As to personalities, or rather the personality of Henry Miller, none would dream of calling him old-fashioned (though some of his writing dates, notably the passages chosen by Nicholas Moore in a recent patronizing pamphlet). But the beginning of his essay is coloured, I think, by Mr. Miller's present residence in America. Such a phrase as "art-products"<sup>1</sup> would be possible to man of his calibre only, let us hope, in California; nor would it occur to us to trot out that old war-horse, "the artist is

<sup>1</sup> *I regret.* The New Statesman, 11.3.43, carries the word 'profitability.' - R. H.

ahead of his time"—we would say, rather, that the artist is prescient and if he writes of death and destruction it is because his antennae are aware of these long before the insensitive average, or common, man. Indeed, there is a certain liberality of cliché in the author's beginning which seems to me to indicate that he is writing to be read but is uncertain of, and thus making concessions to, those who will read him. Moreover, a habit of not following up some arguments to their conclusion implies an uneasiness with his audience—though Mr. Miller's arguments, I appreciatively add, have never proceeded by strict logic alone! He will raise a point, with which we disagree, only to flatten it and bend it to his own use with the next—which we welcome, usually with enthusiasm. Once he gets into his stride, and is "prophetic", he is the Henry Miller we are familiar with and that, readers, particularly of his *Hamlet*, will not need telling, is the Miller familiar with the Tibetan Book of the Dead. It is at this point that, the sweep of his vision precluding amplification of detail, I would wish to enlarge on what, in his essay, occur as suggestions. I feel that some readers may be deflected, and held up, by the statement that "what we have hitherto known as art will cease to exist", unless they consider that that means, in essence, "the forms of art". I do not believe that anything ceases to exist; it changes its form, and for that "ceases" is a slap-dash bosh-shot sort of a word. But taking "what we have hitherto known" to mean, "the forms" of art, we agree that these forms indubitably will change—and in terms of the centuries which Mr. Miller uses as others do a stop-watch, unrecognizably. The forms of art, as we know them to-day and have for centuries, are at best intermediaries—a very good best, I hasten to add, lest I seem in the camp of the vandals. Into these intermediaries, which he creates, an artist pours his vision. From them, that vision

radiates. He gives form to his vision—in words, paint, stone. He translates it. Clearly, there should come a time when translation should not be necessary. This is not to say that art will “cease”. For though works we hold as beautiful to-day will be as nothing beside the beauty men will know then, that is no reason for destroying such beauty as we have now: nor is it, I think, right to imagine that our art will be considered as a “hang-over”; it is to be hoped it will be recognized for having been a seeking forward; however clumsily, bravely nevertheless.

I elaborate on this because I would not for one moment have Mr. Miller find himself accidentally close to Mr. Wells, who in the popular press almost gleefully envisages the destruction of works by Donatello, Michelangelo, and the rest, on the grounds that we can make copies. We can make copies of men, but that has not yet been thought a reason to rescind the view of murder as a crime.

Art, as we know it, evokes in us a response to that which inspired the artist, or giver of form to the intangible. In time, it may be that response will be evoked direct. (I developed this thesis long ago in an article on the Infancy of Television.) Here I have only room to suggest that every writer knows the song that is beyond words, the music he can hear but not write down, for handing on. That search, which seems to be for the perfect word, may in reality be for the overthrow of words. Or, taking the other view, if that perfect word were found—there would be no need for others. We should have passed beyond them.

But, to something else.

That time is not yet, and therefore it is well to remind ourselves of the pristine meaning of art, lest more like Mr. Wells, who—to give him credit—has never sought to be an artist, have their way. Too many have fallen into the habit of speaking as if works of art were solely beautiful

objects, the making and viewing of which postulate indulgence in a purely selfish personal pleasure it does us no harm to do without.

This is evil. Doing without does no harm only to the un-self-disciplined, and self-discipline is the first step. To do without that *and* everything else is doubly wrong. You can't have it both ways, or, rather, you can't not-have it both ways.

Those who have the self-discipline which enables them to understand the constituents of a work of art know that it is more than a beautiful object. It is a manifestation of vision beyond self, and an affirmation of faith in that vision, that selflessness. As such, it is to be venerated. In grieving that works of art are destroyed, we grieve not only at destruction, but at violation of the spirit they stood for. That spirit is not yet so common in the common man (that myth Mr. Wells helped to contrive) that he can afford to do without expression of its existence, for his goal and as call to development.

That is why, to return to Mr. Miller, "in every stage of civilization the condition of the common man has been far from civilized"—for the simple reason that as soon as it becomes so, he changes from being common in that respect. But there is always a further respect, and if I seem harsh on material security, it is because common wealth will only mean wealth becomes common, not valued—like all we have in common; life, love, art; these we could share but choose to destroy. The real step forward of material security will be the liberation to achieve peace of mind. But though those who have it "may come in clusters and the day after in hordes", I imagine there will always be an un-common man, who looks a little ahead, for the encouragement of his fellows—and is hounded to death for his pains. But a better death, probably, than most which crowd to greet us now.

## NEW LIGHT ON A POEM OF RIMBAUD

(*Michel et Christine* from *Les Illuminations*)

By ENID STARKIE

THE LATER POEMS of Arthur Rimbaud are difficult to interpret—indeed many of them seem to defy solution. It is, however, possible that they are obscure largely because he has given no clue whatsoever to his allusions and that, if the initial inspiration could be guessed, it would be discovered that their intellectual content, far from being impenetrable, was in fact quite simple. “J’ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage,” he said in *Les Illuminations*.

Amongst the verse poems of *Les Illuminations* is one entitled *Michel et Christine* whose title has led to much speculation, since the only reference to these two characters occurs in the last line. Why, then, is the poem called *Michel et Christine*?

The first three stanzas of the poem describe a thunder-storm and the havoc caused by it. The flocks on the mountain-tops, the sheep-dogs and the shepherds are bidden flee from the heights where the storm is raging to find, in the valley below, “des retraits meilleurs”.

Zut alors, si le soleil quitte ces bords !  
Fuis, clair déluge ! Voici l’ombre des routes.  
Dans les saules, dans la vieille cour d’honneur,  
L’orage d’abord jette ses larges gouttes.

O cent agneaux, de l’idylle soldats blonds,  
Des aqueducs, des bruyères amaigries,  
Fuyez ! plaine, déserts, prairie, horizons  
Sont à la toilette rouge de l’orage !

Chien noir, brun pasteur dont le manteau s’engouffre,  
Fuyez l’heure des éclairs supérieurs ;  
Blond troupeau, quand voici nager ombre et soufre,  
Tâchez de descendre à des retraits meilleurs.

The poet however, does not seek refuge with the lambs,

the sheep-dogs, and the shepherds for he is carried away in imagination by the storm.

Mais moi, Seigneur ! voici que mon esprit vole,  
Après les cieux glacés de rouge, sous les  
Nuages célestes qui courent et volent  
Sur cent Solognes longues comme un railway.

La Sologne is the marshy plain along the river Loire and it is strange that Rimbaud should have used this image since he had never been to the district. Robert Goffin, in *Rimbaud Vivant*, suggests that the poet is thus indirectly referring to the fields which run along a stream in his own home-land of Roche, which the local inhabitants call La Loire or L'Alloire. This may well be true and would be in keeping with his method of giving obscurity to his poems.

Then the picture changes; the image of the natural storm expands into that of war and merges with it. The storm—war—carries along with it “comme mille graines sauvages”, a pack of savage wolves over the old continent of Europe where a hundred wild hordes will sweep.

Voilà mille loups, mille graines sauvages  
Qu'emporte, non sans aimer les liserons,  
Cette religieuse après-midi d'orage  
Sur l'Europe ancienne où cent hordes iront !

“Les liserons” is probably a reference to the evil effect of that plant, convolvulus, on crops. The storm—or war—favours the co-operation of the weed in the work of destruction.

Finally the storm dies down and the moon shines out. The warriors, on their chargers, ride proudly and calmly away from the battle. And all is peace.

Après, le clair de lune ! parout la lande,  
Rougis et leurs fronts aux cieux noirs, les guerriers  
Chevauchent lentement leurs pâles coursiers !  
Les cailloux sonnent sous cette fière bande !

The poet identifies himself with one of the soldiers riding away and the poem ends.

— Et verrai-je le bois jaune et le val clair,  
L'épouse aux yeux bleus, l'homme au front rouge, ô Gaule,  
Et le blanc Agneau Pascal, à leurs pieds chers,  
— Michel et Christine — et Christ ! — fin de l'idylle.

This is the only reference to Michel and Christine.

In this last verse it seems clear that the young man is wondering whether he will ever see the autumn woods and the fair valleys of France again, whether the Paschal Lamb eaten by the Jews, at the feast of the *Passover*, to commemorate their escape from captivity, will ever be slaughtered to celebrate his own safe return. The image of the "Paschal Lamb", combined with the girl's name, suggests Christ, "The Lamb of God, without sin." Perhaps he may have thought of the prayer from the Mass, "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world have mercy on us, give us peace !" For it will be seen that Rimbaud, at the time of composition, might have felt that he himself was in need of mercy and peace. These allusions and suggestions seem clear, but who then were "l'épouse aux yeux bleus" and "L'homme au front rouge" ? Who were Michel and Christine ? The fact that these names give the title of the poem indicate that there is some special significance attached to them, that they have some bearing on the meaning of the poem as a whole.

Having had occasion to read the Vaudevilles of Scribe and having discovered that one of them was in fact called *Michel et Christine*, I have thought that here might perhaps be found the solution to the title and meaning of the poem.

*Michel et Christine* is a play which enjoyed great popularity during the Second Empire—particularly in the provinces; it was in it that Hortense Schneider, the famous interpreter of the musical comedies of Offenbach, Meilhac, and Halévy, was first noticed—and it is unlikely



that Rimbaud did not know of it. Memory of it may have flashed through his mind when the poem was taking shape in his imagination. He believed that there was some special virtue attached to sudden and unconscious associations of ideas, that in the flashes from the past which came unbidden to graft themselves to the initial inspiration, lay the secret of poetry. *Michel et Christine* is a sentimental little play of no great interest telling how Stanislas, a Polish soldier, returning from the wars, comes down from the mountains into the valley to seek Christine with whom he had fallen in love when he had passed through the village on his way to the battle. He finds her—in the meantime she had become the owner of the inn where she had formerly been maidservant—she promises to marry him and he makes plans for an idyllic life with her. However, at the end he nobly renounces her when he discovers that she really loves Michel, a simple country youth much given to blushing—perhaps the expression in the Rimbaud poem, “l’homme au front rouge,” may refer to this—who returns her affection. He rejoins his regiment, when it passes through the village, fully convinced that he will be killed in the ensuing battle, but he begs his hosts, nevertheless, to keep a corner for him at their hearth, in case he comes back, saying that he will help them to bring up their children and will tell them stories of his military exploits. The play ends with the vision of the happy idyll of Michel and Christine. The two lovers symbolize perfect and simple happiness in mutually requited love.

Some of the verse poems of *Les Illuminations* are dated, and the largest number of these were written during the spring of 1872 when Rimbaud had temporarily returned to his home in Charleville as a result of the scandal created in Paris by his relationship with Verlaine, when the latter's father-in-law insisted on the separation of the two friends. The poems express a state of profound mental stress and

anguish. In most of them there is the image of a violent storm which sweeps the poet away; in most of them is suggested his distress at being unable to attain simple and ordinary happiness and satisfaction; the feeling that there is always something just beyond his reach. He writes in *Mémoire*.

Jouet de cet oeil d'eau morne, je n'y puis prendre,  
ô canot immobile ! oh ! bras trop courts ! ni l'une  
ni l'autre fleur : ni la jaune qui m'importune,  
là ; ni la bleue, amie à l'eau couleur de cendre.

Ah ! la poudre des saules qu'une aile secoue !  
Les roses des roseaux dès longtemps dévorées !  
Mon canot, toujours fixe ; et sa chaîne tirée  
Au fond de cet oeil d'eau sans bords, — à quelle boue ?

It is as if he were conscious that some hidden obstacle always cut him off from return to normal enjoyment. This is most movingly expressed in the beautiful poem *Larme*, written in May 1872.

L'eau des bois se perdait sur des sables vierges.  
Le vent du ciel, jetais des glaçons aux mares . . .  
Or ! tel qu'un pêcheur d'or ou de coquillages,  
Dire que je n'ai pas eu souci de boire !

And also in *Comédie de la Soif* of the same month.\*

Et si je redeviens  
Le voyageur ancien  
Jamais l'auberge verte  
Ne peut bien m'être ouverte.

There is almost certainly some sexual basis to this anguish and distress. Whether this is due to a guilt-complex induced by his discovery of his homo-sexuality or merely by his homo-sexual relations with Verlaine—a feeling intensified by the treatment he received from his elders against which he was not old enough to have any defence, for he was only seventeen—or whether it was caused by a feeling of inferiority resulting from humiliation at the hands of some woman—or to a combination of both—is

immaterial and does not affect the quality of the emotion expressed, the conviction that, for some reason, he is cut off from idyllic normal happiness.

The poem *Michel et Christine* is not dated but its mood is so similar to that of *Larme* that it seems probable that it was written at the same time, in the spring of 1872. Rimbaud's distress resembles that of the Polish soldier, Stanislas, going back into the storm and stress of war, leaving simple happiness behind him for ever and expecting to be killed in the coming battle.

### A RHYME

A few years back  
With drink and love  
The rowdy boys were gay;  
But I sat still  
To wonder at  
And watch their play.  
Now I am cold  
And long to catch  
That bright up-rushing flame;  
But all the drinks  
Are drunk now,  
And the feet are lame.

DENTON WELCH

## OF SOME FRENCH WRITERS AND THEIR KEY-WORDS

By MATILA GHYKA

ONE CAN IMAGINE many ways of classifying French writers ; for the amateur of words, the lover of words for themselves, amongst which a still more specialized group includes the collectors of words or of series of words like Rabelais (and James Joyce in English literature), the following is a very simple classification : Writers who independently of the meaning of words, of the ideas they stand for, are directly sensitive to their substance (texture and frame), and to their power of *incantation*, and writers whom this music or magic of the word leaves more or less indifferent. For example, to limit ourselves to French literature, we have as extreme "incantatory" or musical types Chateaubriand and Claudel, and in the opposite category, of those relatively impervious to the music of verbal resonance, Voltaire and André Gide.

We do not intend to dissect here words into their distinct anatomical elements (Form-Structure-Frame, and Resonance-Colour, factors of dynamic or "atmospheric" suggestion, with the respective parts played by consonants and vowels), but, having noticed that every individual is specially susceptible to the suggestive power, the attraction of certain words, because of ideas or images associated by him with the words in question, the "private metaphors" of the individual, we will try to examine and illustrate the preference of certain French writers for certain words.

Let us first take Mallarmé, and notice at once his predilection for the words :

azur pur or vierge cristal  
glacier (and the related words *glace, gel, givre*, etc.).

Besides *or* and *azur*, to which we will return presently, we have here a sort of semantic fixation on words and

images suggesting the ideas of purity, whiteness, "crystalline" coolness. As an example, we will quote the first quatrain of the "Cygne", whistlerian symphony in "white minor" in which rhythm, resonance (the French more expressive *timbre*) and symbols are interblended with a masterly technique :

"Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui,  
Va-t-il nous déchirer avec un coup d'aile ivre  
Ce lac dur oublié que hante sous le givre  
Le transparent glacier des vols qui n'ont pas fui !"

Besides the "crystalline" words bringing forth or suggesting whiteness, snow or frost, let us observe that *all* the rimes of this sonnet, and a great proportion of its syllables, have as tonic the vowel *i*, which not only heightens the absolute pitch of those syllables but also reinforces the sensation of scintillating whiteness pervading the whole poem.

We find again these icy-crystalline images in Herodiade's mirror :

"...O miroir !  
Eau froide par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée."

The idea of virginity is associated with the shimmering of snow in this other fragment of *Hérodiade* :

"J'aime l'horreur d'être vierge et je veux  
Vivre parmi l'effroi que me font mes cheveux  
Pour, le soir, retirée en ma couche, reptile  
Inviolé sentir en la chair inutile  
Le froid scintillement de ta pâle clarté,  
Toi qui te meurs, toi qui brûles de chasteté,  
Nuit blanche de glaçons et de neige cruelle !"

Here are, to remain with Mallarmé, the doublets vierge-azur, azur-pur, or-vierge :

"Pour des lèvres que l'air du vierge azur affame" ...  
"Vers l'azur attendri d'octobre pâle et pur" ...  
"Mais de l'or à jamais vierge des aromates." ...

Or is the tonic of the nostalgic line showing errant poets :

"Mordant au citron d'or de l'idéal amer."

Also :

"Voit des galères d'*or*, belles comme des cygnes "...

"A l'heure où ce bois d'*or* et de cendres se teinte "...

"J'offre ma coupe vide où souffle un monstre d'*or*..."

But *azur* is undoubtedly the fetish, the talisman word of Mallarmé. Let us quote again :

"Fidèle, un blanc jet d'eau soupire vers l'azur ! "...

"Cependant l'Azur rit sur la haie..."

"A crispier un poing obscur

"Contre des clairs d'azur."

And in the last line of the poem entitled "L'Azur" (and beginning with "De l'éternel Azur la sereine ironie") the confession :

"Je suis hanté ! L'Azur ! L'Azur ! L'Azur ! L'Azur !"

It is obvious that in this haunting by the word *azur*, it is the word more than the colour which forces itself on the poet's mind ; it is one of those semitic words (like *Altaïr*, *Horeb*, *sapphire*, *elixir*) the crystalline facets of which give the impression of cool, refreshing gems.

Like the stone in a signet-ring, the word *pur*, another of Mallarmé's talisman-words, is set in the line in which we see the poet :

"Donner un sens plus *pur* aux mots de la tribu."

We will now consider Paul Valéry, in whose poems the words *pur* and *azur* play also the rôle of "catalyzers" ; *dur* takes the place of *vierge* as regards frequency, *or* is here also one of the talismanic key-words ; fountains, frost, and diamonds bring in their crystalline shimmer :

"Le printemps vient briser les fontaines scellées..."

"Le gel cède à regret ses derniers diamants..."

In the same poem (*La Jeune Parque*) we find a quatrain dominated by *dur* and *azur* :

"Mon cœur bat ! Mon cœur bat ! Mon sein brûle et m'entraîne,  
Ah ! qu'il s'enfle, se gonfle et se tende, ce *dur*

Très doux captif de mes réseaux d'*azur*...

*Dur* en moi . . . mais si doux à la bouche infinie ! "

*Azur*, *or*, and *pur* are decidedly the key-words or tonics in Valéry's vocabulary ; here are a few doublets :

- " L'*or pur* de tour en tour éclate et se répète "...
- " Sonne, au comble de l'*or*, l'*azur* du jeune hiver "...
- " Sous l'*azur* et l'*or* d'une tente " <sup>1</sup>...
- " Toi qui dans l'*or* très *pur* promènes "...
- " Pure et toute pareille au plus *pur* de l'esprit."

But *or* is perhaps among his " catalyzers " or tonics the most frequently used by Valéry ; one could fill pages with quotations. Here are a few :

- " L'œil dans l'*or* ardent de ta laine "
- " Sous les espèces d'*or* d'un sein reconnaissant "
- " Toi mon épaule où l'*or* se joue," etc.

*Marbre* and *or* are often coupled together :

- " Des caprices de l'*or* son *marbre* parcouru..."
- " Le *marbre* aspire, l'*or* se cambre."

*Marbre* and *or*, again, meet in the majestic verses in which the author of " Le Cimetière Marin " describes the serene churchyard by the Mediterranean shore :—

- " Ce lieu me plaît, dominé de flambeaux,
- Composé d'*or*, de pierre et d'arbres sombres,
- Où tant de *marbre* est tremblant sur tant d'ombres."

*Pur* is nearly as frequent as *or* :

- " Au lit mystérieux prodigue ses doigts *purs* "...
- " Ouvrages *purs* d'une éternelle cause "...
- " A ce point *pur* je monte et m'accoutume "...
- " Voici mes bras d'argent dont les gestes sont *purs* "...
- " Regarde, un bras très *pur* est vu, qui se dénude "...
- " Ce corps si *pur*, sait-il qu'il puisse me séduire ? "

As with *or* and *marbre*, it is to fugitive gleams of symbolic or quasi-abstract feminine bodies that Valéry generally correlates his " purity " complex.

*Azur*, as we have already stated above, appears as frequently as in Mallarmé :

<sup>1</sup> The doublet *or—azur* reminds us of the charming line of Verlaine :

" L'oi des cheveux, l'azur des yeux, la fleur des chairs."

"Anxieuse d'*azur*, de gloire consumée"...

"Où puisèrent mes yeux dans un mortel *azur*"...

"*Azur* ! c'est moi... Je viens des grottes de la mort" etc.

If we want to draw a conclusion to this long string of quotations, we may stress the two following points:—

(1) The words *azur* and *or* (and *pur* for P. Valéry) are generally used in a quite arbitrary fashion; the colour association, for example, is unexpected, even startling. (This in contrast to Verlaine's verse quoted in the footnote above, where the colour scheme *or—azur* is part of the picture.)

(2) In spite of this (and here is the touchstone of the poet's art) the words are not pointless, nor what the French call "*des chevilles*", just "*padding*"; on the contrary, they generally represent the harmonizing tonic of the verse or strophe, and can therefore justly be called key-words. Their apparently arbitrary presence not only springs up the element of surprise; but has also a nebulous "*aura*" like that which (with the surprise as well) characterizes successful metaphors. To skip from one comparison to another, one can say that the sound perspective becomes ordered, crystallized, in relation to these words, hence too the qualification of "*catalyzer*" sometimes used above: in chemistry a substance is a catalyzer when a particle of it (even an infinitely small one) determines automatically a global reaction, an immediate coalescence in the whole mass of the solution.

Concerning these properties of suggestion or pure incantation belonging to the resonance of certain words, I will here quote the lines, out of his *Introduction à la Poésie Française*, in which Mr. Thierry-Maulnier states that :

"The proper activity of the poet is not to create in himself phantoms in order to enclose them in words, but to eliberate the phantoms which the word itself contains."

But Mallarmé and Valéry themselves have elucidated the



rôle of these words acting like hinges (I have already called them catalyzers, talisman- and key-words) and of their nebulous and shimmering "aura".

In a letter to François Coppée the former writes :—

"What we always aim to is that, in the poem, the words which are already sufficiently *themselves* not to receive any other outside influence, shall be mutually reflected on each other, appearing thus not to have any more their own colour, but to be only like the steps of a musical scale."

And Valéry, (*Nouvelle Revue Française*, 1st February, 1930):

"Whereas pure substance (*le fond*) must be exacted in prose, it is here (in poetry) pure form which commands and survives: sound, rhythm, their action of induction or mutual influence are here the dominating factors, not their faculty of consuming themselves in a definite and ascertained meaning.... A beautiful verse is indefinitely born again from its ashes, becomes like the consequence of its consequence—its own harmonic cause."

Concerning the influence of words on writers, one could of course also quote abundant examples taken from prose; to limit ourselves again to French literature, we will mention the musical prose of one French author in which is also found the set of images and suggestions belonging to the Mallarmean Kingdom of fountains, mirrors, crystals. In his *La Canne de Jaspe*, Henri de Régnier wrote perhaps the most successfully "harmonized" prose of the French symbolist group.

Two illustrative quotations:

"Des lustres suspendaient au plafond leur scintillation orageuse de cristal et d'éclairs."

Then (in the description of a deserted baroque garden):

"... des masques alternatifs de Tritons et de Sirènes crachaient, par la bouffissure de leurs bouches convulsives, une suffocante gorgée de cristal."

## A STILL MOMENT

By EUDORA WELTY

LORENZO NOW RODE the Old Natchez Trace at top speed upon a racehorse, and the cry of the itinerant Man of God, "I must have souls ! And souls I must have !" rang in his own windy ears. He rode as if never to stop, toward his night's appointment.

It was the hour of sunset. All the souls that he had saved and all those he had not took dusky shapes in the mist that hung between the high banks, and seemed by their great number and density to block his way, and showed no signs of melting or changing back into mist, so that he feared his passage was to be difficult for ever. The poor souls that were not saved were darker and more pitiful than those that were, and still there was not any of the radiance he would have hoped to see in such a congregation.

"Light up, in God's name !" he called, in the pain of his disappointment.

Then a whole swarm of fireflies instantly flickered all around him, up and down, back and forth, first one golden light and then another, flashing without any of the weariness that had held back the souls. These were the signs sent from God that he had not seen the accumulated radiance of saved souls because he was not able, and that his eyes were more able to see the fireflies of the Lord than His blessed souls.

"Lord, give me strength to see the angels when I am in Paradise," he said. "Do not let my eyes remain in this failing proportion to my loving heart always."

He gasped and held on. It was that day's complexity of horse-trading that had left him in the end with a Spanish racehorse for which he was bound to send money in November from Georgia. Riding faster on the beast and still faster until he felt as if he were flying he sent thoughts

of love with matching speed to his wife Peggy in Massachusetts. He found it effortless to love at a distance. He could look at the flowering trees and love Peggy in fullness, just as he could see his visions and love God. And Peggy, to whom he had not spoken until he could speak fateful words ("Would she accept of such an object as him?"), Peggy, the bride, with whom he had spent a few hours of time, showing of herself a small round handwriting, declared all in one letter, her first, that she felt the same as he, and that the fear was never of separation, but only of death.

Lorenzo well knew that it was Death that opened underfoot, that rippled by at night, that was the silence the birds did their singing in. He was close to death, closer than any animal or bird. On the back of one horse after another, winding them all, he was always riding toward it or away from it, and the Lord sent him directions with protection in His mind.

Just then he rode into a thicket of Indians taking aim with their new guns. One stepped out and took the horse by the bridle, it stopped at a touch, and the rest made a closing circle. The guns pointed.

"Incline!" The inner voice spoke sternly and with its customary lightning-quickness.

Lorenzo inclined all the way forward and put his head to the horse's silky mane, his body to its body, until a bullet meant for him would endanger the horse and make his death of no value. Prone he rode out through the circle of Indians, his obedience to the voice leaving him almost fearless, almost careless with joy.

But as he straightened and pressed ahead, care caught up with him again. Turning half-beast and half-divine, dividing himself like a heathen Centaur, he had escaped his death once more. But was it to be always by some metamorphosis of himself that he escaped, some humiliation of

his faith, some admission to strength and argumentation and not frailty? Each time when he acted so it was at the command of an instinct that he took at once as the word of an angel, until too late, when he knew it was the word of the devil. He had roared like a tiger at Indians, he had submerged himself in water blowing the savage bubbles of the alligator, and they skirted him by. He had prostrated himself to appear dead, and deceived bears. But all the time God would have protected him in His own way, less hurried, more divine.

Even now he saw a serpent crossing the Trace, giving out knowing glances.

He cried, "I know you now!" and the serpent gave him one look out of which all the fire had been taken, and went away in two darts into the tangle.

He rode on, all expectation, and the voices in the throats of the wild beasts went, almost without his noticing when, into words. "Praise God," they said. "Deliver us from one another." Birds especially sang of divine love which was the one ceaseless protection. "Peace, in Peace," were their words so many times when they spoke from the briars, in a courteous sort of inflection, and he turned his countenance toward all perched creatures with a benevolence striving to match their own.

He rode on past the little intersecting trails, letting himself be guided by voices and by lights. It was battle-sounds he heard most, sending him on, but sometimes ocean sounds, that long beat of waves that would make his heart pound and retreat as heavily as they, and he despaired again in his failure in Ireland when he took a voyage and persuaded with the Catholics with his back against the door, and then ran away to their cries of "Mind the white hat!" But when he heard singing it was not the militant and sharp sound of Wesley's hymns, but a soft, tireless, and tender air that had no beginning and no end, and the

softness of distance, and he had pleaded with the Lord to find out if all this meant that it was wicked, but no answer had come.

Soon night would descend, and a camp-meeting ground ahead would fill with its sinners like the sky with its stars. How he hungered for them ! He looked in prescience with a longing of love over the throng that waited while the flames of the torches threw change, change, change over their faces. How could he bring them enough, if it were not divine love and sufficient warning of all that could threaten them ? He rode on faster. He was a filler of appointments, and he filled more and more, until his journeys up and down creation were nothing but a shuttle, driving back and forth upon the rich expanse of his vision. He was homeless by his own choice, he must be everywhere at some time, and somewhere soon. There hastening in the wilderness on his flying horse he gave the night's torch-lit crowd a premature benediction, he could not wait. He spread his arms out, one at a time for safety, and he wished, when they would all be gathered in by his tin horn blasts and the inspired words would go out over their heads, to brood above the entire and passionate life of the wide world, to become its rightful part.

He peered ahead. "Inhabitants of Time ! The wilderness is your souls on earth !" he shouted ahead into the tree tops. "Look about you, if you would view the conditions of your spirit, put here by the good Lord to show you and afright you. These wild places and these trails of awesome loneliness lie nowhere, nowhere, but in your heart."

A dark man, who was James Murrell the outlaw, rode his horse out of a cane brake and began going along beside Lorenzo without looking at him. He had the alternately proud and aggrieved look of a man believing himself to be

an instrument in the hands of a power, and when he was young he said at once to strangers that he was being used by Evil, or sometimes he stopped a traveller by shouting, "Stop ! I'm the Devil !" He rode along now talking and drawing out his talk, by some deep control of the voice gradually slowing the speed of Lorenzo's horse down until both the horses were softly trotting. He would have wondered that nothing he said was heard, not knowing that Lorenzo listened only to voices of whose heavenly origin he was more certain.

Murrell riding along with his victim-to-be, Murrell riding, was Murrell talking. He told away at his long tales, with always a distance and a long length of time flowing through them, and all centred about a silent man. In each the silent man would have done a piece of evil, a robbery, or a murder, in a place of long ago, and it was all made for the revelation in the end that the silent man was Murrell himself, and the long story had happened yesterday, and the place *here*—the Natchez Trace. It would only take one dawning look for the victim to see that all of this was another story and he himself had listened his way into it, and that he too was about to recede in time (to where the dread was forgotten) for some listener and to live for a listener in the long ago. Destroy the present !—that must have been the first thing that was whispered in Murrell's heart—the living moment and the man that lives in it must die before you can go on. It was his habit to bring the journey—which might even take days—to a close with a kind of ceremony. Turning his face at last into the face of the victim, for he had never seen him before now, he would tower up with the sudden height of a man no longer the tale-teller but the speechless protagonist, silent at last, one degree nearer the hero. Then he would murder the man.

But it would always start over. This man going forward

was going backward with talk. He saw nothing, observed no world at all. The two ends of his journey pulled at him always and held him in a nowhere, half asleep, smiling and witty, dangling his predicament. He was a murderer whose final strokes was over-long postponed, who had to bring himself through the greatest tedium to act, as if the whole wilderness, where he was born, were his impediment. But behind him and before him he kept in sight a victim, he saw a man fixed and stayed at the point of death—no matter how the man's eyes denied it, a victim, hands spreading to reach as if for the first time for life. Contempt! That is what Murrell gave that man.

Lorenzo might have understood, if he had not been in haste, that Murrell in laying hold of a man meant to solve his mystery of being. It was as if other men, all but himself, would lighten their hold on the secret, upon assault, and let it fly free at death. In his violence he was only treating of enigma. The violence shook his own body first, like a force gathering, and now he turned in the saddle.

Lorenzo's despair had to be kindled as well as his ecstasy, and could not come without that kindling. Before the awe-filled moment when the faces were turned up under the flares, as though an angel hand tipped their chins, he had no way of telling whether he would enter the sermon by sorrow or by joy. But at this moment the face of Murrell was turned toward him, turning at last, all solitary, in its full, and Lorenzo would have seized the man at once by his black coat and shaken him like prey for a lost soul, so instantly was he certain that the false fire was in his heart instead of the true fire. But Murrell, quick when he was quick, had put his own hand out, a restraining hand, and laid it on the wavelike flesh of the Spanish racehorse, which quivered and shuddered at the touch.

They had come to a great live-oak tree at the edge of a low marsh-land. The burning sun hung low, like a head

lowered on folded arms, and over the long reaches of violet tree the evening seemed still with thought. Lorenzo knew the place from having seen it among many in dreams, and he stopped readily and willingly. He drew rein, and Murrell drew rein, he dismounted and Murrell dismounted, he took a step, and Murrell was there too ; and Lorenzo was not surprised at the closeness, how Murrell in his long dark coat and over it his dark face darkening still, stood beside him like a brother seeking light.

But in that moment instead of two men coming to stop by the great forked tree, there were three.

From far away, a student, Audubon, had been approaching lightly on the wilderness floor, disturbing nothing in his lightness. The long day of beauty had led him this certain distance. A flock of purple finches that he tried for the first moment to count went over his head. He made a spelling of the soft *pet* of the ivory-billed woodpecker. He told himself always : remember.

Coming upon the Trace, he looked at the high cedars, azure and still as distant smoke overhead, with their silver roots trailing down on either side like the veins of deepness in this place, and he noted some fact to his memory—this earth that wears but will not crumble or slide or turn to dust, they say it exists in one other spot in the world, Egypt—and then forgot it. He walked quietly. All life used this Trace, and he liked to see the animals move along it in direct, oblivious journeys, for they had begun it and made it, the buffalo and deer and the small running creatures before man ever knew where he wanted to go, and birds flew a great mirrored course above. Walking beneath them Audubon remembered how in the cities he had seen these very birds in his imagination, calling them up whenever he wished, even in the hard and glittering outer parlours where if an artist were humble enough to wait, some idle hand



held up promised money. He walked lightly and he went as carefully as he had started at two that morning, crayon and paper, a gun, and a small bottle of spirits disposed about his body. (*Note*.—" *The mocking birds so gentle that they would scarcely move out of the way.*") He looked with care; great abundance had ceased to startle him, and he could see things one by one. In Natchez they had told him of many strange and marvellous birds that were to be found here. Their descriptions had been exact, complete, and wildly varying, and he took them for inventions and believed that like all the worldly things that came out of Natchez, they would be disposed of and shamed by any man's excursion into the reality of Nature.

In the valley he appeared under the tree, a sure man, very sure and tender, as if the touch of all the earth rubbed upon him and the stains of the flowery swamp had made him so.

Lorenzo welcomed him and turned fond eyes upon him. To transmute a man into an angel was the hope that drove him all over the world and never let him flinch from a meeting or withhold good-byes for long. This hope insistently divided his life into only two parts, journey and rest. There could be no night and day and love and despair and longing and satisfaction to make partitions in the single ecstasy of this alternation. All things were speech.

"God created the world," said Lorenzo, "and it exists to give testimony. Life is the tongue: speak."

But instead of speech there happened a moment of deepest silence.

Audubon said nothing because he had gone without speaking a word for days. He did not regard his thoughts for the birds and animals as susceptible, in their first change, to words. His long playing on the flute was not in its origin a talking to himself. Rather than speak to order or

describe, he would always draw a deer with a stroke across it to communicate his need of venison to an Indian. He had only found words when he discovered that there is much otherwise lost that can be noted down each item in its own day, and he wrote often now in a journal, not wanting anything to be lost the way it had been, all the past, and he would write about a day, "Only sorry that the Sun Sets."

Murrell, his cheated hand hiding the gun, could only continue to smile at Lorenzo, but he remembered in malice that he had disguised himself once as an Evangelist, and his final words to this victim would have been, "One of my disguises was what you are."

Then in Murrell Audubon saw what he thought of as "acquired sorrow"—that cumbrousness and darkness from which the naked Indian, coming just as he was made from God's hand, was so lightly free. He noted the eyes—the dark kind that loved to look through chinks, and saw neither closeness nor distance, light nor shade, wonder nor familiarity. They were narrowed to contract the heart, narrowed to make an averting plan. Audubon knew the finest-drawn tendons of the body and the working of their power, for he had touched them, and he supposed then that in man the enlargement of the eye to see started a motion in the hands to make or do, and that the narrowing of the eye stopped the hand and contracted the heart. Now Murrell's eyes followed an ant on a blade of grass, up the blade and down, many times in the single moment. Audubon had examined the Cave-In Rock where one robber had lived his hiding life, and the air in the cave was the cavelike air that enclosed this man, the same odour, flinty and dark. O secret life, he thought—is it true that the secret is withdrawn from the true disclosure, that man is <sup>a</sup> cave man, and that the openness I see, the ways through forests, the rivers brimming light, the wide arches where the birds

fly, are dreams of freedom? If my origin is withheld from me, is my end to be unknown too? Is the radiance I see closed into an interval between two darks, or can it not illuminate them both and discover at last, though it cannot be spoken, what was thought hidden and lost?

In that quiet moment a solitary snowy heron flew down not far away and began to feed beside the marsh water.

At the single streak of flight, the ears of the racehorse lifted, and the eyes of both horses filled with the soft lights of sunset, which in the next instant were reflected in the eyes of the men too as they all looked into the west toward the heron, and all eyes seemed infused with a sort of wildness.

Lorenzo gave the bird a triumphant look, such as a man may bestow upon his own vision, and thought, Nearness is near, lighted in a marsh-land, feeding at sunset. Praise God, His love has come visible.

Murrell, in suspicion pursuing all glances, blinking into a haze, saw only whiteness ensconced in darkness, as if it were a little luminous shell that drew in and held the eyesight. When he shaded his eyes, the brand "H.T." on his thumb thrust itself into his own vision, and he looked at the bird with the whole plan of the Mystic Rebellion darting from him as if in rays of the bright reflected light, and he stood looking proudly, leader as he was bound to become of the slaves, the brigands, and outcasts of the entire Natchez country, with plans, dates, maps burning like a brand into his brain, and he saw himself proudly in a moment of prophecy going down rank after rank of successively bowing slaves to unroll and flaunt an awesome great picture of the Devil coloured on a banner.

Audubon's eyes embraced the object in the distance, and he could see it as carefully as if he held it in his hand. It was a snowy heron alone out of its flock. He watched it steadily, in his care noting the exact inevitable things.

When it feeds it muddies the water with its foot. . . . It was as if each detail about the heron happened slowly in time and only once. He felt again the old stab of wonder—what structure of life bridged the reptile's scale and the heron's feather? That knowledge too had been lost. He watched without moving. The bird was defenceless in the world except for the intensity of its life, and he wondered, how can heat of blood and speed of heart defend it? Then he thought, as always as if it were new and unbelievable, it has nothing in space or time to prevent its flight. And he waited, knowing that some birds will wait for a sense of their presence to travel to men before they will fly away from them.

Fixed in its pure white profile it stood in the precipitous moment, a plumicorn on its head, its breeding dress extended in rays, eating steadily the little water creatures. There was a little space between each man and the others, where they stood overwhelmed. No one could say the three had ever met, or that this moment of intersection had ever come in their lives, or its promise fulfilled. But before them the white heron rested in the grasses with the evening all around it, lighter and more serene than the evening, flight closed in its body, the circuit of its beauty closed, a bird seen and a bird still, its motion calm as if it were offered: Take my flight . . . .

What each of them wanted was simply *all*. To save all souls, to destroy all men, to see and to record all life that filled this world—all, all—but now a single frail yearning seemed to go out of the three of them for a moment and to stretch toward this one snowy, shy bird in the marshes. It was as if three whirlwinds had drawn together at some centre, to find there feeding in peace a snowy heron. Its own slow spiral of flight could take it away in its own time, but for a little it held them still, it laid quiet over them, and they stood for a moment unburdened . . .

Murrell wore no mask, for his face was that, a face that was aware while he was somnolent, a face that watched for him, and listened for him, alert and nearly brutal, the guard of a planner. He was quick without that he might be slow within, he staved off time, he wandered and plotted, and yet his whole desire mounted in him toward the end (was this the end—the sight of a bird feeding at dusk ?), toward the instant of confession. His incessant deeds were thick in his heart now, and flinging himself to the ground he thought wearily, when all these trees are cut down, and the Trace lost, then my Conspiracy that is yet to spread itself will be disclosed, and all the stone-loaded bodies of murdered men will be pulled up, and all everywhere will know poor Murrell. His look pressed upon Lorenzo, who stared upward, and Audubon, who was taking out his gun, and his eyes squinted up to them in pleading, as if to say, “How soon may I speak, and how soon will you pity me?” Then he looked back to the bird, and he thought if it would look at him a dread penetration would fill and gratify his heart.

Audubon in each act of life was aware of the mysterious origin he half-concealed and half-sought for. People along the way asked him in their kindness or their rudeness if it were true, that he was born a prince, and was the Lost Dauphin, and some said it was his secret, and some said that that was what he wished to find out before he died. But if it was his identity that he wished to discover, or if it was what a man had to seize beyond that, the way for him was by endless examination, by the care for every bird that flew in his path and every serpent that shone underfoot. Not one was enough; he looked deeper and deeper, on and on, as if for a particular beast or some legendary bird. Some men’s eyes persisted in looking outward when they opened to look inward, and to their delight, there outflung was the astonishing world under the sky. When a man

at last brought himself to face some mirror-surface he still saw the world looking back at him, and if he continued to look, to look closer and closer, what then? The gaze that looks outward must be trained without rest, to be indomitable. It must see as slowly as Murrell's ant in the grass, as exhaustively as Lorenzo's angel of God, and then, Audubon dreamed, with his mind going to his pointed brush, it must see like this, and he tightened his hand on the trigger of the gun and pulled it, and his eyes went closed. In memory the heron was all its solitude, its total beauty. All its whiteness could be seen from all sides at once, its pure feathers were as if counted and known and their array one upon the other would never be lost. But it was not from that memory that he could paint.

His opening eyes met Lorenzo's close and flashing, and it was on seeing horror deep in them, like fires in abysses, that he recognized it for the first time. He had never seen horror in its purity and clarity until now, in bright blue eyes. He went and picked up the bird. He had thought it to be a female, just as one sees the moon as female; and so it was. He put it in his bag, and started away. But Lorenzo had already gone on, leaning a-tilt on the horse which went slowly.

Murrell was left behind, but he was proud of the dispersal, as if he had done it, as if he had always known that three men in simply being together and doing a thing can, by their obstinacy, take the pride out of one another. Each must go away alone, each send the other away alone. He himself had purposely kept to the wildest country in the world, and would have sought it out, the loneliest road. He looked about with satisfaction, and hid. Travellers were for ever innocent, he believed: that was his faith. He lay in wait; his faith was in innocence and his knowledge was of ruin; and had these things been shaken? Now, what could possibly be outside his grasp?

Churning all about him like a cloud about the sun was the great folding descent of his thought. Plans of deeds made his thoughts, and they rolled and mingled about his ears as if he heard a dark voice that rose up to overcome the wilderness voice, or was one with it. The night would soon come; and he had gone through the day.

Audubon, splattered and wet, turned back into the wilderness with the heron warm under his hand, his head still light in a kind of trance. It was undeniable, on some Sunday mornings, when he turned over and over his drawings they seemed beautiful to him, through what was dramatic in the conflict of life, or what was exact. What he would draw, and what he had seen, became for a moment one to him then. Yet soon enough, and it seemed to come in that same moment, like Lorenzo's horror and the gun's firing, he knew that even the sight of the heron which surely he alone had appreciated, had not been all his belonging, and that never could any vision, even any simple sight, belong to him or to any man. He knew that the best he could make would be, after it was apart from his hand, a dead thing and not a live thing, never the essence, only a sum of parts; and that it would always meet with a stranger's sight, and never be one with the beauty in any other man's head in the world. As he had seen the bird most purely at its moment of death, in some fatal way, in his care for looking outward, he saw his long labour most revealingly at the point where it met its limit. Still carefully, for he was trained to see well in the dark, he walked on into the deeper woods, noting all sights, all sounds, and was gentler than they as he went.

In the woods that echoed yet in his ears, Lorenzo riding slowly looked back. The hair rose on his head and his hands began to shake with cold, and suddenly it seemed to him that God Himself, just now, thought of the Idea of Separateness. For surely He had never thought of it

before, when the little white heron was flying down to feed. He could understand God's giving Separateness first and then giving Love to follow and heal in its wonder ; but God had reversed this, and given Love first and then Separateness, as though it did not matter to Him which came first. Perhaps it was that God never counted the moments of Time ; Lorenzo did that, among his tasks of love. Time did not occur to God. Therefore—did He even know of it ? How to explain Time and Separateness back to God, Who had never thought of them, Who could let the whole world come to grief in a scattering moment ?

Lorenzo brought his cold hands together in a clasp and stared through the distance at the place where the bird had been as if he saw it still ; as if nothing could really take away what had happened to him, the beautiful little vision of the feeding bird. Its beauty had been greater than he could account for. The sweat of rapture poured down from his forehead, and then he shouted into the marshes.

“ Tempter ! ”

He whirled forward in the saddle and began to hurry the horse to its high speed. His camp ground was far away still, though even now they must be lighting the torches and gathering in the multitudes, so that at the appointed time he would duly appear in their midst, to deliver his address on the subject of “ In that day when all hearts shall be disclosed ”.

Then the sun dropped below the tree, and the new moon, slender and white, hung shyly in the west.



## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

LETTRES. Editions MARGUERAT. Lausanne. 6 issues a year, subscription 15 Swiss francs.

THE EDITORS OF this new magazine, of which I have received the first five copies, announce that they want to print work by young French or French-speaking Swiss authors. In addition there are translations from Spanish and English, including fragments from T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.

This is the first time for three years that I have been asked to review contemporary work in French and I find it difficult. What a gulf has grown up between us! In England the younger writers are more robust, more sure of themselves than were their colleagues of the thirties. They do not like war but they react to it with vigour and with hope. *Lettres*, on the other hand, is full of resignation, a passive mysticism and an almost academic inquiry. This may not be a symptom of France to-day, though I have noticed the same tendency in the few stray copies of *Lettres Francaises*, issued in Buenos Aires, that have come my way. It is probable that in both cases, the work represents a small group isolated through the war in foreign lands and cut off, against their will, from the stream of contemporary life, for the few pages in *Free World* from André Gide's diary, describing the entrance of British and American forces into Tunis have the same clarity and vividness that we find in writing here.

The third number of *Lettres* interested me the most, a good sign with a new venture. Georges Cattaui contributes a puzzling article on Mallarmé, who is one of the most positive and active of poets to me. Jean R. de Salis evokes memories of Paris, and Pierre Jean Jouve describes the influence of some imperfectly understood aspects of the French Revolution upon his early childhood. Pierre Courthion writes movingly of France.

As a good Anglo-Swiss, however (I lived there for twenty years), I was just a little disappointed that there was no contribution to the review that had a definitely Swiss flavour. I have found the Swiss conception of a fighting neutrality most interesting and though no one dislikes any narrow nationalism more than I do, still I should have liked to hear my own canton speaking for itself as it has done through C. F. Ramuz or as French Protestant Switzerland has spoken through Denys de Rougement. They have been in a position of acute danger and difficulty for four years, in the war and yet out of it, suffering the hardships without any of the glory. What does Switzerland think of the Europe that emerges and what contribution have they to make to it? Articles upon such lines would have a profound interest for us here.

BRYHER

THE TWICKENHAM EDITION OF THE POEMS  
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THIS, THE THIRD volume of the Twickenham Pope to appear since its inception in 1939, fully maintains the high standards of its predecessors. Professor Sutherland has published the two important texts: the *Dunciad*, *Variorum* of 1729, in three Books, with Theobald as hero-victim, and *The Dunciad* of 1743, in four Books, with Cibber in Theobald's place, and all the paraphernalia of Letters, Testimonies, Commentaries, Parallels, Appendices, and "Hyper-critics" with which on each occasion the author both enlightened and mystified his readers. These texts have clearly been established with great care, and all worthwhile variants recorded. The Pope and Warburton Commentaries are themselves the subject of considerable elucidation and enlargement; there is a 29-page biographical appendix of great value and no little liveliness;



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the Introduction is first-rate; and in brief, this is *The Dunciad* for our generation.

That it is unlikely to attract a host of readers is no reflection upon Professor Sutherland's labours. For most of us to-day the setting is too remote, the allusions too troublesome, the poem lacks significance. Professor Sutherland rightly argues that there is more to *The Dunciad* than personalities, but as a defence of literature and taste it is surely long out of court. It is justified to its readers not as a defence of literature but as literature itself. Its purpose, which is not to be briefly assessed, could no more keep it alive than an affectation of purpose could keep the *Baviad* alive. Fortunately (for us) Pope was well-spiced with venom and wit. As early as 1716 Swift had told him that fools were as necessary to a good writer as pen, paper, ink, and he improved on this lesson with his own statement that "the Poem was not made for these Authors, but these Authors for the Poem". No reader without some coarseness in him can unreservedly enjoy *The Dunciad*; now I thoroughly enjoy the Games in Book Two, but I cannot find any part of my enjoyment depend on Pope's defence of sweetness and light against the old anarchy Dullness. Had that scoundrel Curll had art and brains enough to write Book Two, and make Pope himself victor of "the high-wrought day", I can't think my enjoyment would in any way slacken. Here I join whole-heartedly with the editor in his praise of the poem as poetry. It would be difficult to overpraise Pope's best achievements in wit and humour, metrical mastery, and deadly precision combined.

There is, I fear, one heavy criticism to be made of the printing of this obviously exacting volume. Sometimes the combined Commentaries, printed at the "foot" of the page, drive the text right off it. Even more frequently the text consists of two lines, or even of one, which is but one

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half-pennyworth of poem to this intolerable deal of apparatus. Possibly this could not be helped; what I imagine should be possible is to avoid printing the first line of a couplet on the recto and the second line over the page on a verso. The shattering example is the very last line of the 1729 edition printed all on its own, on page 194 (a verso). I have never seen a lonelier-looking line even in German editions of Juvenal.

Pressure of space compels me to throw into a last brief paragraph three comments of varied nature. Professor Sutherland is to be congratulated in particular on fitting *The Dunciad* into its period for well-informed but non-specialist readers. He has my personal gratitude for his note on page 376 which supplies an original for that French romantic who cried aloud at the theatre: "Ah, why was not I too born a bastard!" Finally, I notice one misprint, in the quotation from Dacier on page 120, "deux" for "meux".

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She often writes with seeming disregard of surface probability, both in respect to what people say and what they do. But underneath, her novels are in close touch with reality. Their texture is extremely close and fine, and they require all the reader's attention. Discussing the question whether Anna is now to be regarded as a cousin or a sister-in-law, Tullia says: "No, no. I don't want to get as far as concentration. That is quite an uphill path." Not all Miss Burnett's readers may "want to get as far as concentration"—but the loss will be theirs, for this is one of her best books. I am not sure whether so many truths about human nature are enunciated as sometimes; but the characterization is richer and more varied than usual. Considering that they all, young and old, talk in the same tone of voice and share, to a great extent, one idiom of speech, and that the author reduces explanation and comment to a minimum, it is astonishing how differently the faces come out, as the characters patiently and ruthlessly complete their self-portraits.

L. P. HARTLEY

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

*Edited by* ROBERT HERRING

APRIL

## EDITORIAL

1944

### NEWS OF LYDDA

ON THE DAY coincident with this issue there is traditionally broken from civic buildings and churches in this country a white flag with a red cross. It is the flag of St. George, whose day is thus commemorated: but when he was born and when he died, few of us know and not many, I would say, are clearly cognizant of his life. He is St. George of England, and most of us are content to leave it at that.

It is a strange comment on our mentality, as well as on our education, that we do. Beyond a hazy idea that he fought the paynims few of us know why he is a saint or when he became "of England". He was a man whose influence has been excelled by only a few,<sup>1</sup> and yet if we were told that he was a martyr, that he worked miracles, most of us would be surprised. If, when young, we had been told that he was also the son of a sheik and, at twenty, the colonel of a cavalry regiment, we should have been just as surprised but probably more stimulated. As it is, his day does not mean to the English what St. David's does to the Welsh or St. Andrew's to the Scots, St. Patrick's to the Irish. Yet he is greater than those. He is, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> *During his lifetime no less than 28,680 are reputed to have been converted and martyred for his sake.*

and I had better say it at once, the greatest of all martyrs. It is recorded by his servant Pasocrates that God Himself vowed "There hath never been among the company of martyrs who were before thee anyone who is to be compared to thee, and there shall never be among those who shall come after thee". But to speak of his martyrdoms—for he endured several—before his life is to anticipate and, I suspect, to do St. George disservice; had he been known less as a saint and more as a soldier, he might have become, as well as our patron, a national hero as familiar to us as Robin Hood or Cœur de Lion. There is no reason he should not, for George of Lydda is not one of those saints so appalled at consciousness of sin that saving of their own souls becomes the first necessity. Count George appears not to have had oppressive feelings of being a dire sinner. He satisfies our sense of reason at the outset by having found salvation (or, his working principles) early on and rejoicing in (or, being normal about) it (or them). He did see sin all round him, as most of us do, and he differs from us mainly in the wholeheartedness with which he attacked it (he is a fighting saint) and bore the onslaught of evil. This preamble seems necessary because although we are primed on King Alfred's bun-burning, King Canute's wave-warning, with George there is popularly only the Dragon to go upon—and that at once, to the unimaginative (which is to say, the majority) makes him a fairy-tale figure, not to be believed in. I intend here to remind of the historical, military, and aristocratic St. George, and I should perhaps state that my authorities will be chiefly Peter Heylyn's *Historie of St. George of Cappadocia* (1633), Sir E. A. Wallis Budge's translations of the Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopic versions of his life, the Encomium of Theodotus, Bishop of Ancyra in the fifth century, and the Narrative of Pasocrates, the young officer's servant who was with him during his sufferings.

## I

The Dragon may be discarded. George rescued no maiden and slew no monster. What he did do was convert the queen of his persecutor and defy Evil, which is always represented by a serpent.<sup>1</sup> King Dadianus, who tortured him, is both "serpent" and "dragon" and George goes one better, calling him "foul dragon". But the Dragon, which wasn't a dragon, was larger than any one person.

It was Evil wherever he met it. He besought God not for mercy, reward, or salvation but for the military gaining of his objective—"Suffer me not to die" (although his pain must have been such that death was desirable) "until I have conquered Dadianus; and by Thy help, I *will* conquer him". It is this militant "devotion to duty" which we quickly learn to recognize in him, and though "from first to last St. George was honoured because his martyrdom symbolized the fight of Truth against Untruth, Right against Wrong, Good against Evil", the facts of his life speak still, across so many centuries, louder than the symbols which they later became. The following are some of the facts, which being generally forgotten, have prompted me to call this Editorial, News of Lydda.

## 2

George was born in the third century A.D., the son of a governor of Mitelene whose father, John, had been governor of Cappadocia. His father's name was Anastatius, and his mother Tîwobistâ (or Theobista; in Coptic, Kîra Theognôsta), daughter of Dionysius, governor of Lydda.

George was the only son and eldest child, his sisters Martâ and Kâsyâ being respectively three and seven years younger than him. His birthplace, Lydda, is fifteen miles south-east of Jaffa. It is called by Arab geographers Ludd and, as Lod, is mentioned in Nehemiah, vii, 37. There was

<sup>1</sup> Cf. apart from Genesis, Revelation, xii, 7, "that old serpent called the Devil."

a Christian community there early in the first century, for Peter the Apostle "came down also to the saints at Lydda" and this reinforces George's boast that "no man of my race hath been at any time a worshipper of idols", those gods which he later called "not gods but only demons wherein there is no soul".

Anastatius,<sup>1</sup> his father, possessed wealth and enjoyed power as a military count under the Roman governor of the province. He saw to it that his son was "well-trained as a youth in gymnastics and athletics of all kinds"—one of the saint's titles is "Athlete and Soldier of his Lord Christ"—and he obtained for him an appointment in the local army. "In his early manhood George was distinguished for his boldness and skill in military exercises and for his soldierly qualities," and became "so good and perfect a soldier that all the magnates marvelled".

The Coptic version has it that Anastatius died at the age of thirty-six, when George was ten, and that the new governor, Justus, saw to his upbringing. At twenty George was O.C. 5,000 men and had a salary of 3,000 pieces of gold a month, in addition to his personal wealth. He was betrothed to the governor's daughter, but Justus dying soon after, the marriage did not take place. There may have been little time then for George, seeking to be confirmed in his father's rank, collected many valuable gifts and set out for Tyre, to see there the governor, Dadianus. His tribulations then began, almost at once after his father died.

Precisely what happened when he reached Tyre is not known. But it is generally agreed that his torturings were, as will be seen, unusually ferocious, and it is known that Dadianus had summoned seventy kings in conference for the suppression of Christianity. For three years no man dared say he was a Christian.

<sup>1</sup> *The name means "Resurrection".*

George's religion was held against him when he arrived, and he for his part was so disgusted with what he saw that he gave all his gifts to the poor, threw down his military habiliments (or, as some say, gave away even the clothes he had on and stood up naked) and proclaimed his faith.

On refusing to sacrifice to idols, he was tortured for seven years and put to death, being twenty-eight when his spirit at last consented to use his body no more.

That is the history of Colonel Count George of Lydda, son of a Palestinian sheik.

## 3

Round this history grew up the Legend, which has brightened his fame whilst obscuring the facts. "It seems certain that the circumstances which attended his torturings and death were of a very unusual character or he would never have lived in legend and fable for so many centuries." Thus Sir E. A. Wallace Budge, *Sz. George of Lydda* (Luzac, 1930). But without disputing that expert it seems likely that there must have been a reason why George provoked them to be of "very unusual character"—in the first place, and to anyone who has the fortune to read his words, he emerges as a man of quite remarkable bravery of virtue and force, as well as charm, of character. He lived in a time when it was dangerous to say what one believed in and, with no benefit of trance of supernatural command, he openly maintained his belief—alone. Time and again it is emphasized that he alone dared confront the powers. He did not (as so many holy persons seem to) go out of his way to interfere; but he lost no opportunity to tilt at his persecutors. This tilting at authority is a trait to which the English should respond, did they but know of it in him, but, alas, they respond even more to not-knowing.

George's burial place in Lydda soon became a shrine to local Christians. As so often, people found that a pilgrimage improved their health. Cures of diseases were

reported. Caravan-men, we are told, began to take away dust from the tomb, to protect their families and possessions. Gradually the local saint of Lydda became a national saint. His fame spread. He was the "Hero of Christendom". "In Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, and many other countries George was regarded as the Defender of Right against Wrong, the Protector of all widows and orphans and the ever-ready Champion of all helpless, distressed, poor, and needy." In the Greek Church he was known as "the Great Martyr".

His cult became universal. So universal indeed that in 494 Pope Gelasius and his Council of Seventy-two Bishops promulgated a decree banning the reading of "such fabulous histories as those of . . . George". The reason given for this was that the *Acta* of martyrs were often the work of "unauthorized and ridiculous persons, or heretics", causing "ridicule and derisive laughter"; it may be that the Church felt interest in George deflected from others it was more anxious to encourage; but to us the main interest in this decree is that it shows that even before the end of the fifth century the story of St. George had been fabulously over-laid. In England a monastery had been founded at Thetford during the reign of Canute, a church to him is mentioned in King Alfred's will, and the Collegiate Church at Oxford was dedicated to St. George in 1074. There was a church to him at Windsor before the First Crusade, but there can be no doubt that the Crusaders gave impetus to his cult on their return, for they not only saw in him "a brother soldier and a companion of whom to be proud" (whilst also, it is to be hoped, at times being ashamed of themselves); they found him their saviour at the Battle of Antioch and again on 15th July, 1099, when, as reported by William of Malmesbury, on a white steed and in white armour, he helped in the Capture of Jerusalem.



King Richard I, following the example of Constantine the Great, rebuilt his church at Lydda, and Edward III made him the Patron Saint of England.

But as he was venerated as a Saint, Calvin and Luther, to whom saints were idols, had a great down on him. Peter Heylyn refuted them (as well as Spenser's intimation that George was English), but another historian, Gibbon, again slandered him (helped by confusion with another George). Since then the life of St. George has not, I would suggest, been as well known to most Englishmen as that of, say, Joan of Arc or Thomas à Becket.

I was not, on the whole, educated worse than the majority of my fellows, and in the matter of masters I know I was blessed. But News of Lydda did not come into schooling, nor do I know anyone into whose it did. I venture to think that if we were—not taught, heaven forbid! we want not more “educating” but less—if we had been able to “happen” on George in our reading, we might have had a different view not only of sainthood but of that difficult adolescent problem, the Godhead. The Deity with whom George converses—more often than did Moses, the lawgiver, be it said—on such affable, confident terms is not the “jealous God” that frightened childhood's compulsory church-going and atrophied the religious sense in so many of us. He is neither testy nor threatening. He is reliable, encouraging, friendly—not forgiving, because for once there is, apparently, nothing to forgive—which is such a relief. George is declared to be “pure and perfect as a pearl”; yet he remains young, human; humble to his Maker, but because he is straightforward not so over-awed that he discards his natural humour (George is one of the few saints I know of who “laughs openly”). There is, in his discourse with the Deity not joking, because he was well brought-up, but a lightness of touch which goes a little further than refusing to be pompous.

He can make, as will be seen, slyly deprecating reference to those who will be after his body for relics ; but as will also be seen, he has respect as well as resilience and when he prays one feels it would be hard to refuse requests so artlessly couched.

The God of George is a God made happy by this believer, His champion. George in his turn is happy—despite his excruciating torture, his long agony, his several deaths. He did what he wanted—he openly proclaimed and lived up to his principles (or Faith), and he bore the brunt of that declaration without faltering. In which he is as we all wish to be, for what frightens in pain, the real pain of pain, is the fear we might be broken by it. After his death, according to the legend, he continued to do what he wanted—to fight ; at Antioch, at Jerusalem, and down to the nineteenth century when, in 1862, he is alleged to have halted the flow of lava from erupting Vesuvius.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his martyrdom he knew no desolation of spirit. There is no reviling, no moaning, no condemning. One of the most characteristic and touching miracles ascribed to him is the raising up of people who had been dead for four hundred years—and therefore had no opportunity to be Christians. On their own wish he baptized them, then sent back their bodies to the tomb, but their souls to Paradise. His, despite its outer aspect, is a happy story. Perhaps that is why it did not suit the authorities, for authority always prefers to terrify us with unhappiness than to fight positively against evil.

#### 4

The Legend of George begins where his history ends—with his death and the manner of it. The fabulousness of this legend may be why we interest ourselves so little in

<sup>1</sup> As I write his statue has again been taken to the edge of the lava-field, with what result press-date forbids me being able to record.—R. H.

him. But as his historical existence cannot be disputed, the salient interest to-day of the legend is how it accrued to him.

First, let us see what it is. Four accounts exist of his martyrdom, of which the Syriac is the shorter. All agree that he was martyred four times and three times rose from the dead. In this he differs from all other martyrs. He was boiled, his ashes being scattered or buried; he was beaten to death; he was sawn asunder; finally, he was beheaded.

In addition the tortures to which he was subjected included being hung, head downwards, for ten days and nights; being scalped; being flogged for eight days by two soldiers. His legs were cut off, his eyes torn out. Molten lead was poured down his throat. Acids were rubbed into his wounds. He was nailed to a platform with 70 (or 700) nails. He was smothered in pitch and sulphur, and "reduced to ashes". Some of these tortures, it will be noticed, we have not been able to exceed even in our day. It is small wonder that his tormentor had frequently to retire to devise new cruelties. One was to scrape him with combs till his organs showed through the shredded flesh.

In all these he was sustained by frequent visitations from Christ and from God. When he was put into iron boots, through which red-hot nails were driven, the Archangel Michael soothed his feet with dew. It was remarked that George always appeared healed and well from his tortures.

He was put in a wheel and cut to pieces by knives fixed inside. The pieces were cast into a pit and covered with a big stone. After earthquakes and darkness Christ appeared in a chariot of fire and ordered Gabriel to bring up St. George's body, into which He breathed life.

The Coptic version has it that after being roasted for three days he was put into a cauldron of melted bitumen. This was buried 45 feet deep and a fortress was built over it.

Gabriel brought up St. George and Christ restored him to life.

When he was at last killed, by what then seems the comparatively painless method of beheading, St. Michael "received his blood in his garment of light and Our Lord having wrapped his soul in the purple of the æther ascended in that to heaven". All accounts agree that Michael<sup>1</sup> and Gabriel<sup>2</sup> were constantly on hand, that God did not hesitate to send down his Son. Heaven, it will be seen, thought highly of George.

Lest sceptics inquire why let us attempt to explain, and by explain I mean deduce from the accounts not indeed why Heaven thought highly, but why the Chroniclers wished to emphasize it; for emphasize they did in every way.

We may say that his seven years' torturing is a picturesquely formalized description of various dangers or campaigns he faced. His four deaths may mean only that three times he survived what would have killed an ordinary man. Or they may be taken as an insistence on his indestructibility—he could not be killed—or, what he stood for could not be. And so on to George became tacked other legends, jewels from other religions, pinchbeck from other myths. Before considering these let us again repeat what he stood for. Simply—what he believed to be right. In a time of cowardice and corruption he, and he alone, dared to withstand tyranny. That was all.

This country did something like it in 1940.

He was none of those for whom the next world compensates for having nothing in this. To his contemporaries his action was startling. He had birth, riches, rank, love—everything worldly to lose. He did not even wait to lose them. He set them aside. He persisted in his principles,

<sup>1</sup> Michael is "Regent" of the planet Mercury, with which George has been identified.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel, of the Moon.

with no sign that any help would come to him. He had no "sign", no visions, no "calls". There was no heady revelation, no promise of succour. God did not appear to him until of his own free will he had already entered upon his trials.

At Tyre he lost his temper with Dadianus, defied him, and then said, "Do unto me whatever you wish." He lost his temper again when Dadianus wooed him with bribes of money, high rank, and adoption as "son". He curses him with his favourite epithet of "filthy dog", and after enumerating his riches—20,300 pounds of gold, 44,009 pounds of silver, countless cattle, vineyards, plantations, olive groves, and "a palace ornamented with all the ornamentations of this world", he cries out, "I of my own accord abandoned my own great riches which my fathers left me."

When, trying another form of seduction, Dadianus led him at evening to the apartments of his wife, the only advantage George took was to persuade her to stand up for herself and so defy the Dragon, or weakness, which is one form of Evil. He taught her courage.

Courage, one feels, was everything to him. It made everything simple. It left one's mind free, one could get on with considering other things. And George, in his mid-twenties, had done a good deal of considering, as his final prayer shows. There was only one time when he is alleged to have "shrieked" and that was when pointed goads were passed up his nose, to pierce his brain. For the rest he confronted his torturer with the simple, proud, mocking statement, "Dost thou not know that we who are of the race of Christians do not die speedily? And especially is this true in respect of myself." That self he comforted with the reflection "the suffering of the body is only a transitory thing"—a statement whose depth is clearer to us than some other martyrs' meanderings.

That, it seems to me, is one of the reasons for the great appeal of this warrior. He is not meek. He is no milk and water saint. He is Light, the light of reason against darkness. He does not experience emotional ecstacy. He remains self-disciplined and level-headed through his suffering, and there is a refreshing quality of cultivated intellect about him, as instanced in his expounding to Queen Alexandra and as recorded by Theodotus, who knew his kinsmen. "His youthfulness apertained only to the body. He was well-informed in understanding." He was Saint George, but also warrior George—"The Horseman of Christ," "The Shining Man."

With that last designation we come on a clue. George has had attributed to him most of the powers of demi-gods as well as of saints. He was identified with Moses, Elijah,<sup>1</sup> Michael the Archangel (presumably through confusion as leader of the Heavenly Host), with Marduk and Tammûz of Babylon, with Horus the Elder and Râ of Egypt, with Perseus, with Mithraic initiation.

Those who wish can see in his legend a form of sun-worship. Light is always associated with him. His prison is always filled with light. His face is "ten thousand times brighter than the sun". He is called a lamp, a brilliant star. His name is to "shine brightly" and in heaven he wears a golden helmet. Further, it can be remembered that his name means, literally, "husbandman." He is known, even, as "the husbandman of God". In this connection his tortures symbolize what happens to earth. His three deaths are three seasons, his fourth the completion of the cycle. His miracles are mainly lifegiving; he heals, he supplies food, and particularly he causes the wood of planks, pillars, and thrones to bear leaf and fruit. He has only to stamp his foot for "exceeding sweet" water to spring forth. He is always attended by the perfume

<sup>1</sup> *In turn identified with Helios.*

of flowers (in England the rose is his emblem). The Arabs have a prophet, *Girgis Bâkiyâ*, "the Resurrected One"—here it should be observed that at times he appears to become both Christ and God. Through his earthly title he is Lord George, and through embracing the Galilean faith he is George the Galilean, the source of these appellations being themselves lost sight of.

Once this becomes clear we notice that the place of the three Marys is with him taken by his mother, his sister, and his betrothed. There are earthquakes at his death. Being hung on a tree or post, and being nailed to wood, play a large part in his agony. The number seven recurs. It is explicitly stated that he comes next in holiness to the Trinity. But in their zeal, and as if that were not enough, his chroniclers seem to have included him by superimposition.

It is fact that his father died when he was ten. It is legend that his mother, sister, and betrothed were "taken up into heaven" before him, so that they should not see his death in this world. Through this George has early on divinity's attribute of being solitary—later to be sole. He is alone. This is stressed again and again. He was alone at Tyre. "The Apostles preached in all the ends of the world, but they were twelve in number. Thou, O George, thou son of righteousness, did alone and by thyself defy the idolators and their armies." Again, "We boast Ourselves in thee and in the greatness of thy patient endurance and We do so especially because thou art one by thyself." Gradually the lonely one came to stand alone—unsurpassed and incomparable. None can equal him for valour or for devotion. He is "far superior" to all other martyrs—some of whom, be it noted, protested at what they felt favouritism. Finally, "every believing soul after it hath gone forth from its body shall bow down to the Holy Trinity, and then it shall be taken"—not to

Paul or Peter, nor to the Virgin Mary, but to "my beloved George", the laughing saint of Lydda, "that it may bow down to him."

To sum up, it would seem that portions of all religions, all myths, have been magnetized to George, the "chosen warrior".

It may perhaps help readers who have followed thus far to understand why, if I conclude with some of his own words—first to his murderers after one of his resurrections, and then to his Maker, before his last death.

## 5

The soldiers who had been ordered to scatter the pieces of his body from a hill were returning to report the carrying-out of their duty. St. George, reassembled, ran after them, calling out, "Wait for me, for behold I am coming to go with you to the King." The soldiers were startled. George, seeing their confusion, just back from the dead, laughed. "Yea, I am he whom ye cast away."

No rancour, no moralizing. Simply a statement which may seem almost lighthearted for the occasion.

But when he addressed his God we may notice that he was pure-hearted as well. "Let me offer up a prayer," he says, "on behalf of the generations of men which shall come"—no request that his tormentors should be forgiven their sin in torturing him; nothing presumptuous or personal. He continues, "I see very many peoples who will wish to divide my body among them as soon as I have finished my course. And Thou, O Lord, knowest that my body will not suffice for all the world." Yet, "Remember, O Lord, that they are flesh and blood; Thou knowest their ways. Whosoever wisheth to lead them astray or to separate them from Thee, do Thou crush the evil one under their feet and reckon not against them their sins. Grant grace to my name so that no trouble of any sort



or kind shall disturb and no dangerous wound come upon those who shall commemorate me."

His petition found favour. "Thy name is joined to My Name, so that it may be a harbour of salvation to all the world. And every man who believeth on thy name and in the suffering which thou hast endured for My Name's sake, I will deliver from every kind of tribulation and those serious trials wherein the children of men fall . . . in the terrifying place of judgment, in the office of the tax-gatherer, from the hands of thieves and the jaws of wild beasts." If anyone cries three times to the "God of St. George", then "I will answer them speedily". There follow specifications of the grace accorded—"whosoever giveth alms in thy name, I will not allow quickly to suffer want." Anyone who helps the poor, women with child, the lame, or the blind in the name of St. George is to be numbered among the saints. And, above all, "He whose fate it is to find a portion of thy body or even a thread of thine apparel, shall find salvation therein."

## 6

In connection with that last, and in view of the history of this island, it may be recollected that the heart of St. George rests in this country, in St. George's chapel at Windsor. It was given to King Henry V, whose victories were financed by that Mayor of London, Dick Whittington, the history of whom and his cat we know so much better than that of our patron and his "spiritual white horse", or unicorn, the symbol of purity and therefore of strength.

## 7

George replied quietly, "Thou hast honoured me exceedingly, far more than I have deserved." Then, turning to the soldier who was to execute him, he gave his last order, "My son, perform thy mission," and "the soldier cut off his head with the sword."

# THE NEW CANTERBURY TALE

## TOLL AND TRIUMPH

*There are tears for many things ; and human sufferings touch human hearts.*  
—*Æneid*, Bk. ii.

CITIZEN :

The midnight raids were upon us :  
Fascination of fire  
Forced us to adoration : O Lord have mercy upon us :  
To what shall we aspire ?

Dawns droning with dread,  
Days of disaster  
And darkness drenched with destruction : who said  
Man was the master ?

Rooted, we watched the flames,  
Hypnotized by fire,  
Fire that burns up the memory of our names  
Yet raised desire

From the black mines of lust  
And a blind generation  
To the mind miracle of matter that is dust  
Afire with creation.

Miniature men in the street  
Are dwarfed by the huge  
Disaster that drowns them ; and the symbols of church  
and state  
Are a soon-shattered refuge.

Cellars transformed to tombs,  
Charred flesh remains  
And the fanfare of flame that is trumpeted forth from bombs  
Comforts no pains.

The motionless cracked bells  
Of cathedrals poised  
On the keystone of Europe in the wailing strings of the  
shells

Clamour no deaths or joys :

For death is a nightly dread  
Holding no danger,  
And the bitter joys of the living are soon abated  
Or quenched in anger.

Shall we go down to earth :  
Cold consolation.  
Fear is a fire-full friend : attendant at birth  
And in death a consummation.

But fire is a great consumer  
And leaves no memorial :  
Ashes are raised in the wind like a plague or a rumour.  
Shall we make light of burial ?

PROPHET :  
Fire reigning in heaven  
And upon earth  
The reign of bombs : seven times out of seven  
Man has denied his birth.

Sprung from astounding stock,  
Seed of light years  
Is man raising a ruin upon the rock  
Formation of his fears ?

Out of historical clay  
Man has created disaster  
After disaster : and yet can man still say  
Man is the master.

Though Canterbury falls  
And green Llandaff  
Out of the acrid agony of Saint Paul's  
To the unshaken Taff

Music and flames are fed  
From sorcerers' springs :  
The mass of mankind fighting flames they dread  
With fire that sings ;

And every evil city's  
Sirens shall wail  
Their weird lament of loveliness and pity  
Till fire or death prevail.

For fire within man flares.  
But all fire burns,  
Lights or destroys what man desires or dares,  
Consumes him as he learns.

All that a man has known  
In a lifetime, is learnt  
From terror kindled in darkness and bred in the bone  
Or flame of argument.

So therefore take this choice  
Between the controlled  
And flaring flame you inherit and that incendiary voice  
Whose birth but few foretold.

For now is a skeleton  
Polished with hatred  
Haunting your continents ; but in the green world of  
creation  
There is none but imagined dead.

POET :

Out of this burning legend  
Of a tangible death  
Citizen and prophet have spoken, while I imagined  
No more than man upon earth.

The fire of man my theme,  
Myth of the mind  
As spirit ; and in splendour proclaim the extreme  
Toll and triumph of mankind.

In winter, snow fell slowly,  
And cast its spell  
On city and silent hill until the unholy  
Flames created hell :

The red glare in the skies,  
October fires,  
London and Leningrad flickering in man's eyes  
Transfixed by the toppling spires.

Then men for a time were aware  
Of the seed that inspires  
Revolt and revenge in the angels, and destroyed despair ;  
But in their mourning, pyres

Blazed out across their lands ;  
The wastes of snow  
Were dark and desolate, and only work for hands  
Remained, and winds to blow.

Grief is a desolation :  
But human sorrow  
Moves more in man than mere imagination,  
Making out of to-morrow

A vast magnificence  
Of rest and motion :  
Man alone moves in a mood of love and vengeance,  
His state born of a commotion

Within the bone and the brain :  
The ice and snow  
Turn crimson, and no magic of seasonal rain  
Can quench the fire we know

In the heart's wreckage glows  
Like phoenix-clay,  
Which out of the scarlet and black beauty of the fire rose  
And suffers no decay.

PETER HELLINGS

# A NOTE ON POETRY AND THE STAGE

By GORDON BOTTOMLEY

DRAMA IS ONE of the fundamental activities of the mind, and there must have been some kind of stage as soon as language became organic, even though it was thought of as a place for worship ; but the primeval theatre has no history until literature becomes allied with it : it first comes into an esteem heightening to veneration as the home of poetry, of Greek poetry. Yet poetry is not wholly literature—the art of literature *Litteræ Humaniores*, is dependent upon writing, and latterly printing : poetry owes its preservation to these, but it only reaches full existence in sound—The Sound Of Poetry Is Part Of Its Meaning. The text of Shakespeare has at least as much kinship with the full score of a symphony, a piece of chamber music, or (and especially) an opera as it has with Montaigne's Essays, or Lamb's—and much more than with Bacon's.

This is equally true for Milton's *Paradise Lost* (composed in sound) against his *Areopagitica* : the gradual shift of opinion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, under the increasing domination of the printing-press which caused poetry to be thought of as a matter for the eyes, may well be responsible for the signs of functional maladies which are sometimes apparent in the texture of contemporary verse. This astigmatism of thought, however, is only vitally injurious in the theatre : there will always be poetry-lovers who know how to give poetry its full life in sound at their firesides—and poets who discover anew, each for himself, the delight of composing in sound ; as we know by the Westmorland farmer's report of " Old Wordsworth booming away " on the hillside ; and the story of Tennyson composing on his walks, and once at least failing to write the poem down until too late. But in the theatre this idea of verse as literature has combined with

other strands of thought to foster a doctrine that poetry has no place there. A consummate man of the theatre of the last generation who, with a facile talent for verse, had begun life as a poet, came at last to the explicit belief that verse was dead in the theatre, and simply a matter for literature.

If this were true, it would still be true only for a theatre and an age; and it is entangled with a mistaken idea that the stage is a place for the presentation of a facsimile of life; in the last resort, of a facsimile of the surrounding daily life. This, indeed, has been generally held in Britain for a long time now. The traverse which divided the Elizabethan stage into a fore-stage and a back- or upper-stage retained its place and its function long after it had been transformed into a drop-curtain: but when it was moved forward to the footlights of the fore-stage, along with its picture-frame, dramatic poetry was doomed. The picture-frame had fostered the painted scene: with its advance it created the box-scene, and abolished that intimacy of speaker with audience which the free platform of the fore-stage had fostered. Perhaps the Bancrofts, with their plays of the Bread-and-Butter School clinched the break when they provided their modern interiors with ceilings (which destroyed the last of the resonance that poetry needs) and real locks to the doors.

The stage had been reconstructed in the interests of real scenes and colloquial speech: we have seen the result in the elevation of a section of theatric art at the expense of the rest; in a genre of light social comedy, that is the only department of their profession in which many of our players are skilful—and that, nevertheless, has been accompanied by a deterioration in stage-diction. Against this will be set the fact that a few plays by Shakespeare are never long absent from the stage; and that the genius of one young producer has given life to modern verse at the



Mercury Theatre. But in doing so he has broken down the limitations of proscenium-stage structure in the direction of the antique freedom. As to current productions of Shakespeare in modern theatres, it is confined to a few plays enjoyed for plot and characterization—and for the work of a few actors with an instinctive feeling for poetry ; but the stage-structure does not instigate this instinct where it is not inborn ; neither does it create such desires in an audience that managers are encouraged to revive the less popular of Shakespeare's plays, or the rest of the Jacobean drama (which we label as a National Heritage and leave on its shelves).

It has been usually held that the late Victorian actor-managers smothered Shakespeare with scenery ; but Irving, at least, knew his scenery was not necessary, and almost expressed a personal desire to do without it. The trend of the time was against him—and the construction of his theatre : and poets realized this when William Poel reconstructed an Elizabethan platform-stage, with immediate contact and communication between players and listeners—and no picture-frame.

The effect of Poel's early productions was like a miracle performed upon material so familiar as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* : his work upon *Everyman* was a feat of resurrection of something long thought dead. Only an antiquarian rigidity prevented his making his full effect on the contemporary theatre. His museum-piece stage distracted the general attention from his liberation of the actor, and of the actor's voice in a sudden enhancement of stage-speech.

It was then that some lovers of stage-poetry realized that speech in a verse-play is not the same thing as speech in a colloquial play. The sound of the words counts for much more : the power of the words is enhanced by the control of rhythm : the words, in short,

manifestly became the action at supreme moments, though uttered in stillness. Poel's success seems now a simple thing in the telling: when it was new it was startling. Probably it was responsible for Yeats's saying that, in rehearsing verse-plays, he wished he could stand his players in so many tubs, and himself push the tubs about the stage with a long pole when he wanted the players to move and establish themselves in new relationships.

It is not on record that he put the idea into practice: such enthusiasm would have defeated itself by realization: but the enhancement of diction's place in the play by the use of verse was realized anew at that time. It seemed clear that such a piece of stage-work as, say, the garden-scene in *Romeo and Juliet* had much less affinity with the love-scene between the plumber and the ballet-girl in Robertson's *Caste*, or even the last scene of Maurice Donnay's *Amants*, than with some masterpiece of opera. Verse is an unnatural, patterned utterance as much as the vocal part of an opera is: and the quality of its sound can count for nearly as much.

There have, indeed, been ages in which poetry was considered to be part of music, rather than of literature—in the *genre* of the ancient Ballad, for instance; and vocal tone was then recognized as part of verse-expressiveness. But it is as much so in *Romeo and Juliet*, when the Romeo and Juliet of the hour know how to make it so.

Dramatic poetry, indeed, to live wholly on the stage, must be in supreme control; and not simply one of the factors of a general effect, as speech is in *The School for Scandal* or *Rosmersholm* or *La Dame Aux Camellias*. Beyond that, its visual effect will not be complete unless stage-movement is controlled, dominated by the rhythms of the verse as well as by the actualistic needs of the theme. A different training of the player's body is needed.

The dramatic poetry of other European countries has

oftener recognized<sup>1</sup> that actualization (in a naturalistic plotting) of a play's theme is not very logical in combination with an artificial, patterned speech controlled by verse-form and metrical detail. Racine may seem more naturalistic than Æschylus; but each in his degree has worked upon a basis of matching a patterned, non-natural speech with a patterned non-natural plot. Consider an extreme example of this idea, in *The Seven Against Thebes*—written for two actors playing many parts, and a Chorus which punctuates this series of duets. The effect is almost that of a poem in an enlarged *ottava rima*, the duet suggested by the alternating rhymes, the Chorus by the punctuating couplets; and yet this formalization interferes in no way with a concurrent symbolization of reality.

It seems possible that such a formalization—a speech enhanced by the way in which poetic utterance causes language to breed in on itself, and subjected to the intense expressive control of rhythm and metre (of a variation of metres, with a lyric element, and not simply the familiar blank verse that is still founded upon Elizabethan and not contemporary speech) might give a new stage-life to dramatic poetry. If, that is, such a drama could be liberated from the restrictions of a stage on which speech has become largely a commentary or illuminant of action, a richer speech might become the action—as it was in the times when the dramatic art is known to have been supreme.

In a fuller connection with the prose, proscenium-theatre of the present than any other modern poet has known, Yeats came to despair of poetry ever being accept-

<sup>1</sup> While the great fires of the mind were illuminating our Elizabethans and first Jacobean, they found no difficulty in using verse to develop a plotting which might equally have been developed in prose; but when the fires were dying down in Massinger and Shirley, the prose-plot took command and made of blank-verse another method of writing prose. Dryden probably felt the difficulty when he would have substituted the heroic couplet; but instead of being content with an artificial speech, he confounded his effort by concocted artificial plots too often. Psychological truth is the only reality which a creative artist may not neglect.

able there. This he attributed in part (and rightly) to the structure of the stage; but greatly also (and not convincingly) to the insensitivity and ignorance of modern audiences. He believed a solution might be found in a theatre of "a little clan", a clan of aristocrats—such a theatre as had come into being in Japan in our Elizabethan era. With an imaginative resource that reminded us he had studied in his youth the art of design as well as that of literature, he conceived a physical theatric structure that might be used in any large room—liberating the theatre of poetry from trammels of scenery and all back-stage machinery. He followed his Japanese inspirers by bringing the dance into combination with the poem: it was a more highly organized combination than could soon be fruitful in Britain, but it showed that a greater study of stage-movement than we have known here could heighten and supplement poetic expression. In constituting his unit of drama he added a group of speakers who might be described as a Solo-Chorus, thereby opening the way to still more potentialities.

Perhaps the limitations he imposed on these vital inventions discouraged him from developing them, and from insisting on the form to the public: at any rate he took them no further, and even remade the finest of the plays in a way which less usefully subjugated poetry to dance.

His ideas found more potent opportunities in two new theatres. The Poet Laureate's, built in his garden on Boar's Hill, was no less explicitly intended for poetry: it had indeed a proscenium, but its drawbacks were neutralized by an inner stage at a higher level and with a second proscenium. The two levels made practicable and convincing the development of a choric element again: and the traverse was reinstated.

Mr. Terence Gray's reorganization of an ancient Cam-

bridge theatre contributed still more ideas for a poetic stage. He abolished the proscenium, substituting massive tableau-curtains which could either reconstitute one at need or be thrust widely aside to leave a platform-stage controlled by an all-pervasive lighting system (notably without footlights); and this stage he opened to the auditorium with several steps along its whole width. In spite of several enlightened experiments in reorganizing auditoriums, the Cambridge Festival Theatre was the only attempt so far made in England at fundamental innovation in the theatre, and the creation of a universal stage. It is regrettable that its creator's tenure was so short; for it might have been the seat of fruitful experiment and creation for many years. It was of its time, and not an Elizabethan museum-piece: but it demonstrated the superiority—nay, the necessity—of the Elizabethan platform-stage for the presentation of poetry. Yeats had been suspicious of the facilities of modern stage-lighting; but there it was seen that the more completely the stage could be illuminated, the less need would there be for explicit scenery and the elaboration of detailed realization. Poetry could live more fully in its ambiances of light.

A stage at two levels; a stage with a wide, stepped front; each in its different way offered similar opportunities to those of parados and orchestra in ancient Greece, of using a Chorus yet at the same time defining its expressive purpose in distinguishing it from the play. Within true choric verse there is embodied a technique and discipline for its utterance. It has too long been the prey of the musician; but his vocalized tones are no solution of its problems, and cannot have been known in the Greek theatre which invented the form. The greater durations of musical utterance would disrupt performance and poetic form alike if they were applied to the full text of the choric portions of any play of its great dramatists: while vocalization kills

words, and words are more important than notes—with a rarer music too in their infinite modulations of tone, in comparison with the singer's semitones and the musician's aspirations after quarter-tones.

The great drama in former ages used, then, theatres with which scene-painting and place-realization had little to do. Æschylus as well as Shakespeare set their scene with their characters' potent words: and their method is still the right one for a modern theatre of poetry. If it can become again the only one, so much the better; both on account of the consequent simplification of problems of mounting, which would do much to free such a theatre from its dependence on the capitalist, and thus make poets and other poor men free of it; and also because the less dependence there is on mechanic factors, the more sources of effect can be found in the poetry itself.

The blank-verse of our dead theatre is no longer sufficient: every kind of verse-form should find a place and a function in a live theatre, as they all did in the beginning—lyric measures in the Chorus; narrative measures, and specific narrative poetry, in forwarding the development of the play's theme, and in bridging and subsuming places in the story not easily capable of dramatic exhibition; and more metrical devices than the customary one (and even including stanzaic forms) in the essential poetic device of soliloquy, but equally in dialogue also. If it is objected that such resources are out of place in a play, the answer should be that they may have been so awhile, but not always: dialogue, for instance, is often conducted economically and constructively in (and counter-pointed across) the stanza-shape of a ballad: a narrative piece has been seen to be structural as a "narration" in modern music-drama, and just as much so in the Messenger's speech in a Greek play. The latter, indeed, may be looked on as a fundamental need in a verse-play—both as offering

too fine an opening for poetry at the height to be neglected, and also (as has already been said) in bridging passages in the story which do not lend themselves to the stage. The Elizabethans knew this, for all their realism in plotting ; but few of them—except Shakespeare, at such points as the description of Ophelia's death—had the creative resource necessary to make the most of such opportunity.

There is no intention in all this to confine the Chorus to its antique function, where it had a ritual purpose that at points brought it outside its purpose in the play. Its members may still be among the *dramatis personae* ; but its function can be usefully enlarged by depriving them of personal existence on that level, and using them corporately to exist (instead of supererogatory scene-painting) as a background to an action—or even to create the atmosphere in which characters exist and the play passes. As an instance, I have in mind a scene in which a demented woman, in great agony of mind, had run wildly among desolate mountains in heavy snow : verse and choric movement together worked with the actress to a grandeur of effect which the same actress alone among painted canvas would not easily have equalled.

It seems certain that in Athens and seventeenth-century Comédie Française a play in verse was much more of a costume recital than any audience would endure now ; for that could only have succeeded when superb accomplishment in the delivery of verse could count on audiences trained by long custom to appreciate such a gift. This cannot be hoped for now for a long time ; to make verse acceptable now, its producer has to obtain a continual slight change in the scene presented, in order that the eye may unobtrusively assist the ear to listen : and a great factor in this may be the work of the Chorus under an imaginative ballet-mistress, who will not wish to make chorus into ballet (leaving its members with no breath for

their primary work in verse), but will further them with a scheme of subsidiary movement that would be a satisfying plastic composition if interrupted at any moment. In the snow-scene instanced above, the inspiration was not the obvious one of whirling snow in a dance, but the far greater possibilities of new-fallen snow, slipping and trailing from one gracious shape to another.

In the first years after experiments of this kind in the Boar's Hill Theatre, sundry professional experiments in London did not take sufficiently into account the difference between such work and acting. There were some innocent and spontaneous attempts at the Westminster Theatre about that time which, in their confiding unrealisation of the needs of the *genre*, would soon have brought discredit on it if they had not been too half-hearted to continue.

A fully integrated poetic drama, indeed, again shows its kinship with opera in the need for a subsidy in some form to cover training and rehearsal which no box-office could cover: or the work of highly trained amateurs in one or two famous societies for choral music might offer another model for the creation of a working organism.

On the other hand, for the performance of poetry the need for a costly theatre of the conventional type does not arise. It is true that the more the electrician can help, the better; yet the fundamental need for him is moderate, and the only other needs are for a platform at two levels, and a neutral background. A book of property-designs for the hieratic Oriental Nō drama can indicate to us how slight a contact with actuality the furnishing of the stage needs. Every facet of the potentially great beauty obtainable, centres in the performers: if they are right, nothing can maim such a drama: and the only finishing touch that can be added to them is to spare no expense in the single item of clothing them suitably for their purpose. In the equivalent theatre of the Far East, the dresses are of such



fine design and value that they have the veneration and care of church-vestments, and pass from one generation of players to another ; and that might well be the ideal here too for a Theatre of Poetry.

## LINCOLNSHIRE BOMBER STATION

ACROSS THE ROAD the homesick Romans made  
The ground-mist thickens to a milky shroud ;  
Through flat, damp fields call sheep, mourning their dead  
In cracked and timeless voices, unutterably sad,  
Suffering for all the world, in Lincolnshire.

And I wonder how the Romans liked it here . . .  
Flat fields, no sun, the muddy misty dawn,  
And always, above all, the mad rain dripping down,  
Rusting sword and helmet, wetting the feet  
And soaking to the bone, down to the very heart. . . .

HENRY TREECE

# THE BESIEGED

By ALEX COMFORT

KEYES

MRS. KEYES

ANNA, their daughter

ERNEST, their son

JOE, Anna's betrothed

ANNOUNCER

FOTHERGILL, in Joe's air crew

BRANDES, the consultant

Time—the present

## ACT ONE

*(A room after dark—the curtains drawn. There is a single reading lamp but no other light. It stands on a green-topped card-table. ERNEST is sitting in a wheel chair beside it, his feet wrapped up in a tartan blanket, drawing on a board across his knees. ANNA has been reading aloud to him—her book is open in front of her.)*

*(Before the curtain rises, five aircraft pass over, one after another, and the last of them is just out of earshot as the stage is seen for the first time. Silence.)*

ERNEST : Well, you might go on.

*(Silence. After a few seconds the sixth aeroplane passes over.)*

ERNEST : Satisfied ? There were only six. Five plus one makes six.

ANNA *(beginning to read)* : This old fornicating fellow will not out of my mind yet. Gentlemen, I'll begin to you all and I desire more of your acquaintance with all of my heart. Fill the gentlemen some beer, George. Look, George, the little boy's come again, methinks he looks something like the Prince of Orange in his long stocking, if he had a little harness about his neck, George, I will

have him dance fading. Fading is a fine jig, I'll assure you, gentlemen. Begin, brother . . . (ERNEST *has by now begun to whistle.*) You aren't listening.

ERNEST: It isn't even as if you knew he was up to-night.

ANNA: What are you drawing?

ERNEST: The new sundial. The mess are going to cast it in cement to go on the lawn outside the guardroom. They say they want to decorate the place a bit themselves. Like it?

ANNA (*taking it*): You shouldn't . . . tire yourself.

ERNEST: You weren't going to say that. You were going to say I shouldn't waste my time. But I want them to have this—it'll do them good.

ANNA: What is it? The figure, I mean?

ERNEST: A woman and a child looking up at the sky. Where are the others?

ANNA: Mother's been in town all day.

ERNEST: She's back. I heard her come in. Old Jefferson muttered something about a new doctor last time he was here. I think she went to see him.

ANNA: Yes—she went to see him. Why a woman and a child?

ERNEST: Just as souvenirs.

ANNA: Anyone would think they never risked their own lives.

ERNEST: We've said all this before. Damn it all, a dying man can say what he likes. I'm making them a sundial according to my own ideas. If they don't like it they can smash it up to fill sandbags. Are you going to read some more?

ANNA: If you like. But stop making me angry. Begin, brother—now a'capers, sweetheart: now a turn of the toe, and then tumble—can you tumble, youth? •

ERNEST: Hey—I can hear old Jefferson upstairs. (*Shouting.*) Jefferson! Jefferson—come down here, you

blighter ! Anna, open the door, there's a good girl—he can't hear me.

(ANNA opens the door and stands beside it.)

ERNEST : Jefferson ! (*An outside door closes.*) He hasn't seen me. That means he gets no fee for this visit at any rate. Anna, what are they up to ?

ANNA : They went to see Jefferson's old chief—the man who taught him.

ERNEST : Taught him to misjudge a patient's character and think him strong-minded enough to be told he was dying. He could have told you. He need not have told me.

ANNA : Did you want to be deceived ?

ERNEST : Yes. I wonder what they said about me to-day. I won't go into hospital.

(*Another plane goes over.*)

ANNA : Dr. Jefferson told him . . .

ERNEST : That I'd had three negative blood cultures, that I needed cheering up, that he'd better come and see me.

ANNA (*looking at the window*) : Five of his cases have recovered.

ERNEST : Out of how many ? Is it a new drug ? I remember the last one—the sulfadiazine—I went blue and vomited like a cat.

(*Another plane goes over.*)

ANNA (*going to window*) : We shouldn't live here.

ERNEST : I'm not living. Is Joe coming in to-night ?

ANNA : I don't know. If he's not flying he may. He can't tell me.

ERNEST : Where's mother ? (*ANNA does not answer.*) At this very moment he may be liberating Europe—whee . . . crash ! Another street liberated. . . .

ANNA : Shut up !

ERNEST : I'm sorry. Hadn't you better go on reading ?

ANNA (*sitting down at the table again, beside the lamp*) :

Begin, brother. Now a'capers, sweetheart : now a turn of the toe, and then tumble—can you tumble, youth ?

(MRS. KEYES *comes in, slowly, and stands by the door.*)

MRS. K. : Ernest, you're drawing again. Don't draw so much. It wears you out.

ERNEST : I've got to do something.

MRS. K. (*as she comes and sits down near ERNEST*) : I saw the Doctor.

ERNEST : I heard Jefferson going. I called to him but he wouldn't see me. I won't go into hospital.

MRS. K. : I've promised you shan't go.

ERNEST : When's he coming ?

MRS. K. : He promised me specially to come on Friday. He's a very kind man. You know he taught Dr. Jefferson.

ERNEST : Why does Jefferson want him to see me ?

MRS. K. : He wants his help—to get you on your feet sooner, he said. I'm glad he's coming. I know there's nothing to worry about, but all the same I'm glad.

ERNEST : Where's father ?

MRS. K. : At the post, talking to Barnes. (*Looking over the board.*) What beautiful things you draw. What is it ? A fountain ?

ERNEST : A sundial. (*She strokes his head.*)

MRS. K. : You're a clever boy.

ERNEST : Mother, what were you making out there ?

MRS. K. : Coffee.

ERNEST : I'd like some.

MRS. K. : I'll get it. (*She goes out.*)

ERNEST : I'm a clever boy. I'm a clever boy. O my God, I shall tell her.

ANNA : You dare : you dare.

ERNEST : She'll know ultimately. I've tried to let her know by hints.

ANNA : If you tell her, I hope God punishes you.

ERNEST : I've a credit account of punishment to draw on.

ANNA: You aren't the only one. Joe's facing it, too. You've six months to live. He may not have another day.

ERNEST: I suppose it's true. I'm sorry for Joe. He'll leave nothing behind.

ANNA: He'll leave—no, it doesn't matter. What does it matter what one leaves?

ERNEST: That's all you know about it. Have you ever imagined utter darkness—when there's nothing whatever?

ANNA: Yes. It would be good.

ERNEST: If you think that you must be devilish. If I had never built anything, I'd not be able to go through with it.

ANNA: You couldn't help yourself—it's a thing that you don't have to go through with. It comes to you. Joe goes through with it—you sit and wait.

ERNEST: He liberates people a thousand at a time—why can't he have the decency to shoot me instead of some poor bloody German woman?

ANNA: Shut up! Shut up!

ERNEST: I'm sorry.

ANNA: So am I. (*She goes to him and stands where his mother stood.*) You won't tell her.

ERNEST: No. She wouldn't believe me if I told her. She hopes—even when she knows she'll die herself some day, she hopes the soul is immortal. I've a new view of life—something I never saw before—how do ordinary people go on, when all the time they're on the edge of Nothing? Don't they see it? How did I manage to live and study and rag about? It's like the tightrope walker with his eyes bandaged, and if you take off the bandage he totters off the rope.

ANNA: We have lost the bandage. (*She puts her arm round him. The light is so arranged that we can see neither face.*) \*

ERNEST: I want to live for ever.

MRS. KEYES (*coming back with the coffee*): Here it is.

(ANNA moves away from him. MRS. KEYES sits down by the table again. She picks up the book which ANNA was reading aloud.)

MRS. KEYES: Don't draw any more now, Ernest.

(Another plane passes overhead.)

ANNA (going to door): Come in, Father.

(KEYES, who has been standing outside listening, comes in sheepishly.)

ERNEST: Hullo, dad.

KEYES: Bitterly cold night. I've been down at the post talking to Barnes. Did you hear the news at six?

ERNEST: No.

KEYES: Things are going a lot better. We're going to pull through. Time was when one didn't dare to listen to the bulletins. I give it all six months—not longer. Don't let me forget the news.

(Nobody answers him. Another plane goes over.)

ERNEST: Onward, Christian Soldiers.

MRS. KEYES: This is an extraordinary play you're reading, Anna.

ANNA: The Knight of the Burning Pestle.

KEYES (hovering round): Seen my pipe? Anybody seen my pipe?

(ERNEST begins to whistle between his teeth. The whole family is now grouped round the lamp. As they speak in turn, none of the others notices or moves—ANNA stands by the closed curtains, ERNEST surreptitiously draws, KEYES puffs at his pipe, vacantly, and MRS. KEYES continues to read the book.)

ERNEST:

It would have been enough to have been deceived.

I never knew until now how suddenly

all things can lose meaning—the whole incredible circus be inverted, lost, astonished. The besieged

wait for the entry of Nothing, the entry to Nothing.

There is only one gift worth having, and that is life.

When one is still a child, I think one does not know :  
But if they had not told me, I think that I should still  
have found out some day, and seen the world darken,  
my house become unfamiliar, the grates fireless,  
the garden tainted, everything full of change  
of hideous going-out.

It is not as if a single spark would remain  
a mineral crystal of thought, a small heart beating  
under the tides of moss. I have built bridges,  
it is absurd that my whole mind, myself,  
should rest on a piece of flesh, on the come-and-go  
of a ridiculous muscle ; all the unbuilt  
bridges thwarted by a mechanical failure.

How do they live, the heavy people continue  
working and fighting—when they know it, smile  
and admit "Yes, we die"; children write "Man is  
mortal"

in copybooks. What is it that covers our eyes ?  
What bloody joker chained me to a corpse—  
like my cracked uncle, who, to punish them  
bought toys and broke them in his children's hands—  
and when I speak, the bones move in my face  
and when I draw, I can feel them moving again  
in my own hands. I have stolen  
a few more years with my two bridges  
a hundred perhaps—two hundred if they stand.  
It is kind madness, that the people  
are like the happy lions, and know nothing—  
can live with dead men's pictures—be reminded  
that one who ate with them has utterly ceased—  
see every day the white stones, or the news  
that someone born before them has gone out,  
and still not wither.

ANNA :            Perhaps he is going out  
a cargo of murder packed behind his back,



or limping home again, the gunner dead,  
England a moonlit leaf, but he not seeing it.  
Because we have believed liars, because we have obeyed  
fools, he will kill, and then die  
who would have been the father of my children.  
There is only one freedom, to disobey,  
to demand life, to make life, to live  
but one cannot disobey death. Curse the world, damn it,  
liars and death and causes, the drivelling pimps  
who take our lives—the world that takes our lives.

MRS. KEYES :

I have believed now, I will always believe  
that these things cannot be  
that he will not die  
that it will be as before  
help thou mine unbelief.

I have believed now, I will always believe  
there is no time for being afraid  
the trees are real, they will always stand  
summer and snowfall. Why should one be afraid ?  
There is the fire burning. There are many things to do.  
I have believed now—I will always believe.

KEYES :

I have seen a dark sea, but I do not know where—  
water rocking our house like a staggering boat  
nobody tells me any longer what they are thinking :  
I have dreamed of seeing helmets in our street.  
Everything is going to be all right.

ERNEST :

I am afraid. I am afraid of sleep.

*(In the pause which follows, KEYES, still moving as though nothing had been said, looks at his watch, crosses R, and turns on the radio. As he sits down again, the figure of the ANNOUNCER is seen behind the cabinet of the set, lit apparently by the bulb inside.)*

ANNOUNCER :

Do not be afraid of sleep—I tell you  
it is the best gift that you can receive.  
Because you are dying you have no cause  
to be afraid of sleep—everything is made easier  
by it. You have no cause to be afraid of sleep.

ERNEST :

I will not go to sleep !

ANNOUNCER :

The dying man  
fights the anæsthetist, clings to his pain.  
Why should you not sleep when you can alter nothing ?  
You know perfectly well that you can alter nothing.  
Death will come to you even if you lie awake,  
coming between sleep and morning, cold but welcome,  
the final reward of all obedience.

ANNA :

Do not peddle obedience here. If there is one thing  
my children shall learn, it shall be disobedience,  
refusal, refusal—not to surrender  
their hands and minds to swine, not to obey,  
Death is obedience.

KEYES :

We know perfectly well that we can alter nothing.

ANNOUNCER :

What is the good of disobeying death ?  
You do not change it—all your bones compel you.  
The only hope lies in obeying death  
obedience, like sleep, is well worth having.

KEYES :

Everything will be all right—we had better sleep  
we cannot change it.

ERNEST ?

I would have changed it—  
this damnable joke is being played on me.

Those who obey finish as butchers and corpses—

ANNOUNCER :

And those who disobey as raving madmen—  
it is the same thing, one way or the other :  
there are certain limits you cannot exceed—  
and it is only reason to stay within them,  
sleep, and obedience, and good citizenship.

ERNEST :

You bloody salesman, peddling citizenship.  
I know—you have the inevitable, a smiling club  
to knock me down, but there is still defiance.  
And man is only different from the rest,  
the dogs, the lions, because, knowing the end,  
seeing the darkness, still he can defy.

ANNOUNCER :

Willing or not, still you will all go down  
with dogs and lions into silence, knowing  
perfectly well that nothing can be changed.

MRS. KEYES :

O, it is better to sleep. The water is darker  
than any winter lake. I will not look at it.  
I have believed now, I will always believe  
in sleep and in obedience. I will always believe—  
darker the unseen water now than any night.  
I have believed now, I will always believe,  
help my unbelief.

KEYES :

You are the old hired voice, familiar  
after twenty years, that sent my brothers to death.  
I have not forgotten that.  
But what you say is true—nobody can reason with you.

ANNA :

But we will not obey, even if you kill us—  
but we will not obey, nor turn and deny life—madness  
does not frighten us now, it is no madder

than what we know. The million voiceless curses  
of all men always, of all women always,  
who will not sleep, the thousands of the beggars,  
eyeless faces pressed to the panes of the glass,  
defy, defy. I will teach my children this,  
they shall know that all things are their enemies—  
I think the lions have learned what is good.

ERNEST :

The flesh that rules us is our enemy.  
We are bound to our bodies. One can defy the world  
but not the heart, the bones, the surly rebels  
are not amenable to reasoning—one cannot implore them  
to spare a thing worth having. They say "Time",  
clap down the hood, calmly, fortuitously.  
There is nothing with which to reason  
and cursing is a waste of strength  
there is no one to curse

ANNA : I will still curse them

I will still curse them

KEYES : But there is nothing we can do to change it

*(ANNA rushes to turn off the set. Throughout the whole of these speeches no character has ceased their occupation—ANNA standing still, ERNEST drawing, KEYES smoking, MRS. KEYES reading. None has looked up. As ANNA turns off the light of the set, there is almost total darkness.)*

MRS. KEYES : Anna, what are you doing ?

ERNEST : Hey, I can't see. . . . }

ANNA : I can't stand it. }

*(Momentary confusion. Suddenly the room lights are turned up. JOE, in the uniform of a pilot-officer, is standing with his hand on the switch. ANNA runs to him.)*

JOE : What are you all doing, sitting in the dark ?  
What's up, Anna ?

ANNA : I thought you were dead. . . .

JOE : I'm anything but dead. Steady, old girl.

MRS. KEYES: We shouldn't live so near the airfield. Every plane that goes over she thinks is yours. Now Anna...

ERNEST: How's the Christian Soldier?

JOE: Pretty fair. How's the bridge-builder?

ERNEST: Working on a sundial that'll make your ears burn.

KEYES: How d'you think the war's going, Joe boy?

JOE: Wouldn't know—I'm only fighting in it. Come and sit down Anna. (*He leads her to the sofa.*)

ANNA: I'm sorry. I'm a silly fool. But we shouldn't live here. It's like being besieged.

JOE: Besieged by me?

ANNA: Yes. (*He puts his arm round her.*)

MRS. K.: Are any of the others coming in from the Mess?

JOE: Fothergill might, if he's back in time.

MRS. K.: Because I'm going to bed. Frank, I'm going to bed—they don't want to talk to us. Ernest, it's high time for you.

ERNEST: Presently, mother.

MRS. K.: Come along, Frank. (*She kisses them good night—ANNA and ERNEST, then, with a laugh, JOE, who hugs her.*)

KEYES (*going out*): Night, Joe. I want to talk to you some time.

JOE: Night, sir.

(*All three wait, watching the door for a few seconds, until the steps are out of hearing.*)

JOE: What did the doctor say?

ERNEST: He's bringing his esteemed teacher down here to touch my pulse, collect fifty guineas, and order the coffin. He's coming on Friday. I live in hope.

JOE: You don't give him much help. You're an ass, Ernest. Anyone would think you wanted to die. \*

ERNEST: Wanted? I want to die? Joe, you've got no idea what wanting to live means.

JOE: I rather doubt that.

ERNEST: If you want to live you need only disobey. I can't desert from my body. Damn it, you only need to complain of being shaky and they'd ground you.

JOE: Yes, they probably would.

ERNEST: At the moment you aren't only killing off grannies and infants, you're killing off my sister.

ANNA: Shut up—shut up—for God's sake shut up!

ERNEST: Race you, Ernest.

ANNA: Yes, that's it, it's a race—we're not people any more, we're lemmings—all swimming out to sea as fast as we can go. There's the prize of being rid of it all to the one who sinks first. I'll race you, I'll race you!

JOE: Anna!

ERNEST: We all need a drink.

JOE: Is there any more coffee?

ERNEST: I'll get it. No, you needn't open the door for me. (*He propels himself out.*)

JOE: What on earth happened to us then?

ANNA: I don't know. Leave me alone, Joe. I've just about had enough to-night. Father's so full of confidence that his hand shakes too much to hold a cup.

JOE: It's pretty bad for you—Ernest, and now me.

ANNA: Yes. I wonder which will win?

JOE: Why the devil did the doctor tell him?

ANNA: He didn't know him. He heard the name of the thing, and knew what it was. He knows everything.

JOE: What's he like—in the week, I mean?

ANNA: Intolerable—he's terrified.

JOE: He's very bitter. In some ways he's like a very old man.

ANNA: Have you seen the sundial?

JOE (*taking up the design*): This?

ANNA: A woman and a child staring up at the sky.

JOE: Yes. I know. If I were in his shoes—If I had his

talent—I'd work myself to death—I'd produce nothing but designs—it would be a race against time, but at least I'd leave something.

ANNA : No, he's paralysed by it. Have you seen any of his work ?

JOE : The three houses beyond the aerodrome, that we had to pull down for our run-in.

ANNA : His big work—the bridges he built ?

JOE : No. Only the photographs. Where are they ?

ANNA : One in America—that was the bridge he won the medal for : the Americans bought it. The other was finished last year—it's in Luebeck. He never saw it—it was started the year war broke out. We had to hurry home. It was when he was beginning to be ill.

JOE : If I had his talent, if I had anything to live for like that. . . .

ANNA : Yes ?

JOE : I'd take his advice.

(*Silence. ERNEST appears at the door.*)

ERNEST. There's none left. It's cold.

(*He comes over in his wheel-chair and sits by JOE.*)

ERNEST : It's all right, Joe. I'm not losing my nerve. You mustn't think I insult you when I say you don't know what it means to want to live. I have special reasons. You don't know how one desires permanence—my work in stone expresses that. I should go mad if I couldn't cheat reality that far—my bridges may last two or three hundred years with luck. They're well enough built for that. At any rate it beats the universe for a little longer. I sometimes think that if one defies it enough one may alter it, though that's a damn silly idea. It gets you in the end—the Second Law of Thermodynamics means we must go mad, or not know, or just defy. Isn't the sum of all our defiance worth something ?

JOE : In politics perhaps—but you don't stay alive by

defying death like a third-rate Macbeth, boy. You value living . . .

ERNEST: It wouldn't be decent to tell me I over-estimate it.

JOE: Yes, it would. We're all in the same boat. You do over-estimate it. What the devil does non-existence matter?

ERNEST: You see an ash tree, and know that in six months all ash trees will cease to exist. You sleep in a room and look at the cracks in the ceiling and know that those are the last thing you'll ever see. You know the place where you'll cease to exist. It's horrible.

JOE: Why? Damn it, you can't alter it by being afraid.

ERNEST: No, you can't. I wonder what's the matter with us to-night. Just before you came in, we were all sitting saying nothing, but I could guess what the rest were thinking—the wireless churning out the usual charnel stuff, only in terms of thousands; I suppose I ought to be wondering who the hell I am to be so concerned about my bloody little self. When are you going to get started on that sundial?

JOE: When I get a few days—the moulds will have to be made.

ERNEST: How long do you think a cement sundial will . . . last?

JOE: I don't know.

ERNEST: It might be a long time—extraordinary how some things have lasted—look at the bust of Nefertiti—and that blue vase out of the Imperial palace at Pekin. (*Nobody says anything in reply.*)

ERNEST (*slowly*): But we don't know the artists' names. We don't know their names. Why didn't they sign the things? (*ANNA and JOE are side by side watching him.*) I signed my bridge—under the middle arch, so that the bargees would look up and see it, going underneath.

ANNA: Does it matter if they don't know the artist's name? A child hasn't its father's name written on it.



ERNEST : If they don't sign their work, they throw away a little of themselves. Nameless things don't seem to be alive. Isn't that somebody banging on the door ?

ANNA : The names don't matter. The things are there.

ERNEST : Go and let him in. Perhaps it's Barnes—or Jefferson forgot his case.

JOE : I'll go. (*He goes out.*)

ERNEST : I wish you hadn't said that about lemmings.

(*FOTHERGILL is heard yelling and cheering at the top of his voice, in the hall.*)

FOTHERGILL : Jesus, I never saw anything like it ! (*He comes in—he is about nineteen and wildly excited.*) I never flew with McLusky before—threw her about like a fighter—look at the bump on my head. God, I'm whacked. Don't mind me, Miss Keyes—just been telling the I.O. all about it—Tiny's counted the holes in our wing—fifty-two. (*He sits in the chair L.*)

JOE : McLusky been in long ?

FOTHERGILL : Nearly an hour—we've been gassing to the I.O. Didn't you hear us touch down ? We bumped along two flat wheels—cut a groove like a snowshoe. I thought we were finished. I say, Miss Keyes, do you mind if I yell ? I'm sitting in a chair, and an hour ago I didn't think I'd ever see another chair.

JOE : Why don't you get some sleep ? You can't yell here—everyone's in bed.

FOTHERGILL : I ought to sleep—I'm tired—but I had to talk to someone. An hour and a half ago we were right in it—coming up like rain in reverse. (*He begins to walk round and round again.*) McLusky was marvellous. We got it, too—bang in the middle—I've got this (*he produces a piece of stone.*) Found this on board—it must have flown in at two thousand feet—I'm keeping this bit as a souvenir.

(*JOE takes it from him.*)

JOE : What were you after ?

FOTH.: The canal north of Luebeck—that big white bridge and the pumping-station. We missed the pumping station—there was smoke over it—but I reckon we rubbed out the bridge all right. Pity this brick isn't big enough to cut into an ashtray. You haven't got any coffee left, have you, by any chance? I'm just about done, but I want to keep talking. What are you all looking like that for?

JOE: You'd better get back to bed. Go on, Miss Keyes will excuse you.

ERNEST: Did you say north of Luebeck? It was north—not the metal bridge south, by the railway?

JOE: Go on, get along to bed. Shut up and get going.

FOTH.: Oh no, not that one—it was north all right, just by the sandhills. Do you know Luebeck? It must be funny to know these places from the ground—I only got abroad once before war broke out.

ERNEST: I think I'll go to bed. Good night. (*He wheels himself out.*)

FOTH.: Well, we're back—all in one piece—what are you looking so damn tragic about?

JOE: Get out of here.

FOTH.: What have I done? What are you picking on me for? I say, Joe. . . .

JOE: Go to bed. That's an order.

FOTH. (*saluting*): Night, Miss Keyes. You come along too, Joe—you look flat. I say, what did I say that. . . .

JOE: Be quick about it.

FOTH: Going, going, gone. (*He goes out.*)

ANNA: I'll go to him.

JOE (*catching her*): Leave it at that. . . .

(*ANNA goes out, leaving JOE sitting still. Presently she returns.*)

ANNA: He's locked the door.

(CURTAIN)

## WASHING UP

By MARTIN HAWKIN

BREAKFAST WAS FINISHING. In the large mess-tins, as often, were almost untouched issues of porridge and of liver and potatoes. It was the same with the steaming stews at dinner, and sometimes with the peppery potato and bully mashes at tea. Some men, from frugality or appetite, would accept their rations; but from most the call to that day's mess orderly would be "Empty plate, please!" The syndicates who mucked in together would then open a tin of so-called Vienna sausages or of pilchards, filling up with bread, butter, and marmalade. The sausages, pilchards, and marmalade were obtained at enhanced retail prices, after queueing, from the dry canteen. Most of the men on the troopship who did not gamble themselves out spent their money on extra food.

"Who's on washing up to-day?" shouted the senior cadet of the table.

"I am," said a voice from right above him. A man was standing with one foot on the bench, one on the table, his sun-reddened torso, damp with perspiration like all the others, disappearing in the half-light of the kit-racks above. He was putting away his knife and spoon.

There was a crash on the table as a boot from the widely spaced slats of the kit-rack fell on to some cutlery and bounced into an almost untouched plate of porridge. The men eating there reacted with cries of "Clumsy c—!" "Chuck some more down, do!" and "For God's sake be more careful, Ferrier, that nearly hit me". Further up the table there was laughter and from the next mess came an ironic cheer. The shower of kit was a daily occurrence. It was a wonder that no one had been hurt. A steel helmet falling from four feet could kill.

"Sorry," said Ferrier, looking down, grinning until he saw his boot in the plate of porridge.

"Excuse me," said a man from the next table, unable to pass up the narrow corridor between the benches because of Ferrier.

"Can't you people wait to get at your kit until the tables are clear?" said the man with him, a Scotsman. "It's bad enough as it is."

"Come on, then. One way or the other," said the senior cadet on Ferrier's table, behind whom the two were waiting. They were against his bare, damp back, pushing him forward over his mug of tea. He poked back with his elbows into the Scotsman's thighs.

"All right, all right," said the Scotsman, knocking as if half-accidentally against the senior cadet as he pushed out, now that Ferrier had stepped down. In the heat of the tropics, in the dim light of between decks, in the dampness of a hold where two hundred men had just slept and washed, slight extra discomforts were magnified. No love was lost between messes, for each suspected the other, quite rightly, of taking mugs and mess utensils.

Ferrier wiped his boot with the floor-bench-plate cloth, replaced it on the rack above and went on deck.

It was cooler. A strong wind, the monsoon, he supposed, was whipping up the white horses, brilliant under the new risen sun. He made his way aft to the heads. He noticed that the ship was making hardly any way. The steady backward movement of the sea had ceased. At the top of the well-deck companionway stood a cluster of men at the rails. Going down the companionway he looked disinterestedly for the ship joining or leaving the convoy, for the glimpse of the Arabian or Persian coast which might be attracting the loafers. But he could see nothing.

In the heads, the familiar eager rush of the flush water in the troughs greeted him. The place always reminded him of the word water-shed or of Fingal's Caves Overture. The

portholes and doors were open all day and there, outside, was the brilliantly white-flecked sea. Along each side of the narrow shed ran the shoulder-high, doorless cubicles, each with its plain wooden seat, but not each the same. For in some, the continually running powerful flush of sea-water splashed the seats, or the sitter. Ferrier knew the dry spots. He chose his favourite cubicle, just under a porthole. Here we would often sit for half an hour with a book, if there were no waiting crowd.

To-day he did not linger, because of his fatigue. Before him was the most distasteful job of troopship life, most distasteful of the guards, the potato peeling, the wash-house cleaning, the carcass shifting, the sack carrying: washing up forty plates, piled in twos and threes regardless of the porridge in them and consequently stuck together; littered with pilchard remains and their oily tomato sauce: charred with cigarette ash and stubs; heaped with crumbled bread, orange peel, chocolate wrappings; they had to be washed in an iron bowl of cold sea-water with a small rag as glutinous as a pancake.

Ferrier, on deck again, paused before going below. The groups at the rails had grown, men having come up from breakfast. The vessel was moving slowly, turning continually. In the distance the rest of the convoy was departing over the horizon. In the middle distance a light cruiser of the escort was beating back, the seas breaking over her bows and trailing after her like smoke.

"Someone jumped overboard."

A cadet who knew Ferrier slightly had joined him.

"Jumped?" said Ferrier. "Or fell?"

"Jumped, apparently."

"Poor devil!" said Ferrier. It wasn't the drowning that touched him. That was death, it might happen to anyone, it did not qualify as pitiable. But the state of mind leading to suicide qualified as pitiable.

Another cadet standing with them said: "Apparently he heard the concert last night, and jumped over."

No one on the large ship did not now know what had happened, ten minutes ago. The first solemnity of imparting the news had gone. Now came the enhanced sense of life, the details, the jokes. "Hullo, Jack. I'd been hoping it was you gone." "Where did he keep 'is kit?" "Jennings saw it happen." "Hope the pore f—'s dead by now." "They threw him two lifebelts. He was last seen swimming towards them." "Thought a convoy never stopped for a man overboard." "That's just what they say."

Ferrier looked over the choppy plain of sea, crinkled on the slopes by the wind. He looked down into the swaying trough below him. "In a trough like that, flecked with the same white, he is facing out his last minutes." His eyes swept the expanse. "From somewhere out there, he can see us as he lifts on the crests."

The cruiser was level now, turning into the wake of the trooper.

Ferrier went below deck and when his eyes became used to the dimness he started to pick up the plates and scoop off the leavings into the porridgey mess tin.

"Hullo, Ferry," they said. "I hoped it was you jumped over," or "He was fed up with Hindustani, I heard."

"Who was he?" said Ferrier.

"One of the —," someone replied.

Ferrier thought, as he piled the plates: "I was putting my knife and spoon away as he was standing by the rail, looking to see if he was watched as he cocked his leg over.

"I was sitting in the heads as he was standing in the sea, face to face with the cold and with what he had done."

"One of the —, a man from the red soil and green lanes, finishing up in this blue-black ocean."

"It has happened now. He is dead. Yet for weeks still he will be alive for his people at home."

Then he thought no more of it as he sloshed and rinsed in the tin bowl, as he dried perfunctorily and wiped the inside of the tea mugs round. He fished at the bowl's bottom for the knives and forks, down there among pilchard backbones, bits of waterlogged bread and small pieces of potato.

There was a sudden noise on the steep companionway. A mess orderly from another table had slipped and was falling down the stairs, his emptied washing-up bowl bouncing after him. It happened frequently. The wooden steps grew slimy. Then, when your feet slid out under you, there was nothing to do but toboggan down. Gripping the rail did not help, even if you had a free hand.

In heavy seas once, twenty men's rations of prunes and custard had so greased the steps that two orderlies following the first faller had fallen also, the last with a two gallon can of boiling tea in each hand. Ferrier had not forgotten that sight, the shouts, the slithering bared bodies, the thudding and the clanking, and the steam enveloping it all, making it like a dark lithograph of some hellish scene.

"Okay?" he said, after the fallen cadet had finished swearing.

"Yes, but it's not their bloody fault," the man answered, moving off, trailing his bowl behind him.

Ferrier emptied the refuse into his own bowl and carefully mounted the stairs with it. The keen wind and sun nearly threw him back as he emerged at the hatch cover.

"I've got a place for you up here," called a friend from "B" deck.

Ferrier turned the bowl upside down over the rail, with the unasked help of an aircraftman mooning there. The wind caught the falling dirty water and whipped it to spray before it smacked on to the light green-blue of the aerated seas swirling past the ship's side. The tea's red-brown stained the cold colours fleetingly.

Watching the stain fade sternwards, Ferrier's eyes were drawn up to the horizon. He remembered. Somewhere out there, something had happened.

A roll of surf swept over the one empty tin that had floated and the red label announcing "California Coast Selected Pilchards" sank into the Indian Ocean.

"Soon be catching up with the convoy now, eh?" said the aircraftman.



## MR. NOB

By WILLIAM MONTGOMERIE

I DID NOT phone Mr. Kilwin that Sunday morning. I knew he'd be in bed, or sitting in front of his fire, reading detective stories.

His bed-sitting-room was upstairs in a steel house, one of a row of steel houses in a housing estate. The smooth steel plates, bolted together, had been rough-cast and painted in drab colours. One house was brown. The next one was dull lilac. The last one, at the corner—nearest the wet buzzing pylons carrying the wires to the power station—was yellow. Mr. Kilwin's back room did not look over the cabbage-field to the trees, but on to back gardens, fences, and wireless masts. Bright scarlet carnations bordered the path up to the front door of the lilac house.

"Just go up," said his landlady, dressed in black, and wearing a hat as if she had just returned from church. She returned to the kitchen, and I went up the narrow wooden stairs to the bedroom on the right.

"Come in," said Mr. Kilwin. He spoke indistinctly, and I realized, as he looked round from the creaking basket chair, drawn up close to the coal fire, that he had taken out his false teeth.

"You'll have to sit on the bed."

I sat down on the green satin quilt at the foot of the unmade bed. Mr. Kilwin licked his right palm and pressed down over his bald head the wisp of faded hair that was bobbing like a dog's tail over his right ear, as if gummed by the end to his white skull. He buttoned the top of his pale blue Marks and Spencer pyjamas, pulled the collar of his brown camel-hair dressing-gown closer round his neck, and retied the ends of the thick red cord round his waist. I expected him to look embarrassed, being caught at that time in the forenoon in undress. But in his grey short-

sighted eyes, the right one with a very slight cast, there was only a mild curiosity about the purpose of my visit.

"Excuse me a minute," he said, and left the room quietly in soft felt slippers. On the hook behind the door that had opened and closed hung his trousers by the braces, and over them a navy-blue serge jacket whose elbows shone in the cold morning light. He had a habit, he once told me, of leaning on the window ledge of his classroom window. Beyond that window was an ash-tree he had seen budding and casting its leaves for fifteen years. It must have grown taller in that time, though keeping the same shape, but he had not noticed any difference. It had become for Mr. Kilwin a kind of symbol of his own life in one place. Beyond it I could imagine, from his description, the factory water-cooler jetting and steaming from the pipes above the pond in the yard, and the doors of the red brick jute-mill, with the bales of raw jute going in from the docks, and the rolls of golden hessian being taken out to the carts by some of his former pupils, to be carried through the east end to the warehouses. Over all was the smoke of tall chimneys, and the shadow of the tenements.

Mr. Kilwin re-entered the room with his hair carefully brushed across the baldness, and his teeth in. All the time we were discussing the purpose of my visit, his short-sighted eyes wandered round the room, coming to rest at last on the telephone on the littered table by the window.

"By the way, you don't need to waste tuppence to find out if I'm in. Mrs. Johnson won't answer the phone, if I'm here, so if you hear her voice, press button B, and get your tuppence back."

His eyes wandered to the corner behind the wardrobe.

"Have you met Mr. Nob?"

He lifted a walking stick from the corner, sat down on his chair turning it with a creak toward me, and stood the stick like a child on the floor between us.

"Feel the weight of him," he continued, handing me the stick, so that I caught it near the ferule. The heavy head pulled the stick down to strike the floor. He laughed suddenly, and I knew it was a trick he had practised before.

"It's weighted with lead," he continued. "It's very useful in the blackout, coming home late from evening classes."

The stick was beautifully polished, pale brown in colour, with a round head the diameter of a penny, wrapped round and round, like elastic inside a golf ball, with fine green cord.

"I can't remember having seen one before, though I've often heard of a loaded stick."

"It must be thirty years old at least. I borrowed that stick from my uncle about twenty years ago, and it became for me a psychological object."

"You know," he went on, laying the stick on the floor beside him, "when you go up to matriculate at the University, you have your name incised in Latin in the register of your Nation. The secretaries of the political parties meet you, as you go out of the Hall, and all three of them speak together, 'Join the Liberal Club! Join the Labour Club! Join the Conservative Club! You must join one of them, you know.'"

"I had been to several I.L.P. meetings and, though my political views were pretty immature, I joined the Labour Club."

"Looking back, I find it difficult to remember what I believed in those days. I still meet members of that party who are in the same state. They have faith in something which they find it impossible to clarify for the benefit of others. The trouble is that they have no bible. The Russian Revolution was still very young when I was a student, but they had their bible in Marx, Engels, and Lenin. We read the books of Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden,

and the Utopian classics. Where are Ramsay Mac. and Snowden now? The Communists who have a bible make the converts."

He went on in a slightly excited voice, rising higher in pitch as he grew more excited.

"But the stick?" I asked, pointing to it, "Mr. Nob!"

"Mr. Nob!" He laughed as if he were hearing the name for the first time. "I was going to tell you the story of Mr. Nob."

He lifted the stick from the floor, and stood it in front of him like a ventriloquist's doll.

"Between the Union debates, we met in a small dark committee room of the old Students' Union. It's now the women's union, I believe."

He stopped, and I nodded. I knew he was examining in his mind a number of fragments, which a story teller is not sure whether to include for atmosphere, or to leave out.

"But I'll leave out all that," went on Mr. Kilwin. "I'll come to the General Strike. The Conservative and Liberal Clubs interviewed the Principal and got permission to blackleg, as we called it, though they called it something else. They drove tramcars and trains, and we liked to believe rumours that there were several smashes, though it was like a war, and nobody knew what was happening. There were rumours of tanks in George Square.

"We had a meeting, and one man proposed that we should make a list of the medical students who were blacklegging, so that we could organize boycotts when they were qualified doctors. One student, who was also a member of a Labour Party ward-committee, and spoke in the kind of voice that demands attention in the Labour Party—a loud rasping shout, half in anger, perhaps cultivated primarily to be heard above the sound of machines and riveting hammers—stood up, thumping his right hand in his left palm, and won a majority against the impractical

proposal. The debate went on for two hours, and it was finally decided to follow the example of the other two clubs, and interview the Principal. I was not one of the delegation, and I don't know what was said at the interview, but in the interests of fair play the Principal agreed to allow us to picket along with the strikers.

"We were so delighted that we went immediately into University Avenue, and stopped several cars that were climbing Gilmorehill in low gear, hanging on to the luggage rack and the mudguards, the occupants leaning out and swearing at us angrily. We kept our tempers, seeing a lark even in this class struggle between the owning classes and ourselves.

"A party was organized to meet at eight o'clock, at the arch at Porteous's. The fist-and-palm-thumping student would get in touch with the strike committee that evening and meet us with full instructions in the morning.

"I borrowed my uncle's stick—Mr. Nob—that evening, without asking his permission. I had dreams that night of fighting dozens of big-fisted blacklegs, and being arrested for killing a policeman.

"I arrived next morning at the windy arch, feeling very unhappy about the whole affair, realizing I would be a very ineffective picket. I was very conscious of Mr. Nob, and had half a mind to leave him in the left-luggage office in the Central Station. Ten minutes later, two students from the Labour Club came round the corner slowly, and looked at me in a way that showed they felt as uncertain as I did. 'Good morning!' they said in depressed tones. They both looked at Mr. Nob, and at each other. They had no sticks. Then they went off to correct their watches at the clock in the jeweller's window, speaking together in low voices and glancing at me, and Mr. Nob. •

"Another student came from the direction of the Exchange and joined me. He too looked at Mr. Nob, took

him from me, weighed him in his hand, and gave him back. For a moment we had taken our eyes off the other two students, and when we turned to speak to them, they were no longer there.

"At nine o'clock, as we did not know where to picket and our leader did not appear, we went downstairs and had coffee under the Exchange, for which I paid. Then I walked home with Mr. Nob. The tramcars were not running."

Mr. Kilwin looked at Mr. Nob standing there on the floor in front of him, and I knew that he was looking at the Labour Party. The story had been another of his frequent apologies, an attempt to prove that circumstances had prevented him doing something that he would like to remember having done.

"That's why I call Mr. Nob a psychological object."

"Did you ever find out why your leader didn't turn up?" I asked.

"He said he hadn't been able to get in touch with the strike committee, and just hadn't thought it necessary to meet us. When people ask me if I support the Labour Party, I say, 'No, I'm a socialist.' Actually I find stamp-collecting more interesting. I'll show you my collection, if you like."

I said it was getting near my lunch time, and I'd better be going.

"You should promote Mr. Nob," I suggested, as I rose to go.

"Promote him?"

"Yes. Promote him to General."

"Why General?"

"General Strike."

"I don't know," he said doubtfully, laying Mr. Nob in the corner beside the wardrobe, and opening the door, "I've known him for nearly twenty years as Mr. Nob."

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## HERBERT READ ON EDUCATION

By ERIC NEWTON

BY THE TIME I reached page ten of Mr. Read's *Education Through Art*, I was saying to myself, "This is going to be a good book. Just what's needed." By page twenty, "Yes. He's getting on rather more slowly than I expected, but evidently he is determined to build his foundations solidly." By page fifty, "The style's a bit laboured, why doesn't he establish his central argument?" And by page two hundred I was tempted to throw the book across the room. "For heaven's sake Mr. Read stop quoting psychologists. I don't want to know what Fromm thought and Pavlov discovered and Koehler assumed and Burrow wrote. I want to know what *you* think. And I want still more to know what *you* feel. You tell me you believe that Plato had an idea about education that will make the world a better place. I am inclined to agree. But persuade me, please! Show me some passion, some urgency: convert me, quickly! The world is in the melting pot. The younger generation is being taught by men and women who never heard of Plato and don't believe in art. And you, Mr. Read, are simply confirming them in their ignorance by your stress on the jargon of psychology, your detailed analysis of the subconscious, and of Jung's eight types of temperament. Believe me, you are antagonizing them—they who need persuading by all the enthusiasm of which you are capable. You are even antagonizing me who need hardly any persuasion at all. You write as a reformer but you elaborately disguise yourself as a pedant. If art is to reform the world then to hell with eidetics and extraversion and the rest of it. There's a war on. Civilization's crumbling. You build us an elaborate edifice roughed out by Plato, buttressed by Burrow, roofed in by Freud, and then you



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say in effect, 'There's your perfect structure : now evolve a ritual to fit it.' Sakes alive, man, give us the ritual and we'll run up a galvanized iron shed to house it !"

These reflections, of course, are not an essential part of my criticism of Mr. Read's book. They are no more than an accurate record of a shallow, bad-tempered mood, engendered in myself by the first 202 pages of it. Nevertheless my mood is worth recording because what happened to me might conceivably happen to others. I admit I am an unashamed romantic. I am apt to succumb to enthusiasm merely because it is warm and to put up an automatic resistance to pedantry merely because it is cold. I even find it difficult to distinguish between pedantry and scientific terminology. There I am wrong. I know it. Possibly less emotional readers than myself will be less baffled than I was. But I still think that Mr. Read was mistaken to conceal a subject that required an inner fund of urgency under a veneer of psychology. I still think he could have consulted his heart more and his head less.

This is a poor way to begin a laudatory review, but let me assure Mr. Read that I write with a sincere desire to do him a service. He has written an important book. I happen to think he has written it the wrong way round, but that makes me all the more anxious to urge his readers to read it the right way round. Having read it myself, carefully, from cover to cover, and having read many passages twice, I believe I can now offer them some sound advice. This may infuriate the author, but it may also further the cause of education—a cause which Mr. Read and I have equally at heart.

The thesis of the book is as simple as it is sound. The gist of it is as follows. The aim of education should be neither to pour knowledge into the child's mind, nor to force him to accept an arbitrary moral code based on the convenience of the adult, nor to teach him a set of technical

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tricks which will enable him to outstrip his fellows in adult life, but to turn him into a true citizen and an integrated human being. If that is agreed, then obviously the present system of education is not merely faulty, it is upside down. Two qualities are to be aimed at, creativeness and sensitiveness (I don't think Mr. Read anywhere says this specifically, but I hope I have correctly interpreted the spirit of the argument) and education at present seems designed to ignore if not to stifle both. Only a training in art, a training based on æsthetic values, can develop these qualities. And that does not mean more time devoted to art. It does not mean that art is a "subject" that has been hitherto neglected. It means that "it is an aspect of mental development which is all-embracing—which is, indeed, no aspect but a *mode* of mental development." "Our aim is not two or more extra periods. We demand nothing less than the whole thirty-five into which the child's week is now arbitrarily divided. We demand, that is to say, a method of education which is formally and fundamentally æsthetic."

These sentences, which occur on pages 216 and 217, form the keystone of Mr. Read's arch. They are important sentences; they cry aloud for a revolution, a change of heart in everyone from the Minister of Education to the kindergarten teacher, and a consequent revolution of method. Why then (here I return to my original peevishness) does Mr. Read bury them under a load of verbiage which all but conceals them? Why is his keystone not gilded and carved so that it catches the eye and the mind? And why is the rest of the arch so excessively ornate that its very shape is hardly discernible?

In Mr. Read's own interests and for the sake of the future of education, for the sake of the rising generation, and for the sake of the peace and seemliness of the world, I advise, educationalists to follow Mr. Read with close attention

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beginning at page 204, chapter seven, "The Natural Form of Education." Not that the preceding six chapters are irrelevant to his theme (they can be read later), but that they overbalance his book and overload it with the very matter that he is so anxious to avoid, the argument based on reason as opposed to the argument based on wisdom. Never can a plea for æsthetics have been so completely unæsthetic. The idealism of Plato has been pressed into the harsh mould of Aristotle.

Having stated his case, the author proceeds to rough in the outlines of an educational system. Having painted the child's psyche in pre-Raphaelite detail, he sketches the machine that is to mould it with the broad strokes of an Impressionist. Just where detail would help the picture becomes vague. Mr. Read is conscious of this and explains that he is a philosopher not a teacher. That is a reasonable explanation, but the result is that one is left excited, hopeful,

half-convinced and wholly dissatisfied. The book is not merely a lopsided arch. It is only half an arch. What is now needed is a sequel showing how Mr. Read's theory would work out in practice.

For it is not merely desirable, it is essential to the argument to prove that it is practicable and that awkward gaps would not reveal themselves in the shift over from the ideal to the real. If one admits that the whole of education can theoretically be brought within the framework outlined in Chapter 7, then the really vital work begins. The raw material has been examined by Mr. Read with minuteness and thoroughness, but the machine that is to deal with it has been no more than adumbrated.

It is not merely a matter of drawing up a revised curriculum. There is, for example, the question of factual education. Is a knowledge of facts (which presumably even Mr. Read himself would not altogether condemn) to take its chance as a by-product of the knowledge of values? Is arithmetic to be absorbed by the pupil in the course of measuring the timber for a chest of drawers?

And how is the new teacher to be taught? At what point in its circumference is the present vicious circle to be broken? And how?

Admittedly these are details. Mr. Read's main theme is, I think, unassailable. That is why I have ventured to handle his book somewhat roughly. It is a book that must be taken seriously. It is sturdy enough to survive rough handling.

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

*Edited by* ROBERT HERRING

MAY

## EDITORIAL

1944

WITH CONSCIOUSNESS NOW so dominated, as it must be, by the calendar, I could wish that mine did not see fit to remind me that this day on which I write is that of St. Donat. Readers, however, need not take fright; I do not propose to descant on him as I did last month on George. Donat the dragon-slayer, treading hard on St. George, merely permits me to observe that this is a dragon-slaying time of year—as it cannot fail to be, considering that Taurus now rises, when Scorpio, the Dragon, sets.

Again, a disclaimer! A saint last month is not to be followed in this by stars, nor news of Lydda by a voyage to the moon. Taurus meets George in a manner perhaps unexpected by most readers, but not without interest and certainly far nearer home than might be thought. The spring equinox and the summer solstice met, in the Babylonian zodiac, at the top. As Taurus and Leo, they were represented fighting for possession of the skies. But the profile in which they were shown was so severe that the Bull appeared to have only one horn. He was Uni-corn. And as such has come down to us on the British coat of arms. This, being a matter of history, I feel it helps us to know, and by relieving curiosity as to why we have a unicorn and what he is—Spring, re-birth, revenge—releases energy for affairs less abstract.

That said, I abandon herewith history and myth. The editorial contribution this month deals, in Sir Harry Wildair, with a personage quite other from St. George. If the change is sudden, that is mainly because I felt that after two long articles in succession, an essay in verse

exercised other muscles, but partly, also, because I felt that a little lightness might, in nervous times, prove of easy digestion. Sir Harry, whatever else he was, was neither a know-all nor a say-nothing, from one or other of which most of us are now suffering. Further, he may remind us that in Farquhar's day, even to an Irishman, the English had not yet relinquished their reputation for gaiety nor received one for hypocrisy.

Sir Harry Wildair was a soldier, but in no other respect remotely resembled Saint George. He was as certainly no saint as he was certainly a sybarite—and that none could call George, who has read any account of his life. I should perhaps apologize for allowing the songs I have made round Farquhar's hero to come in the front of an issue; but in both the comedies in which he appears, Sir Harry was hard to keep waiting, and had keys to the garden-door if he were denied access to the front. In truth, he seemed more at home near London, where the number starts, than among the Eastern countries with which it ends.

There may, indeed, be apology needed for his inclusion at all. Whether perusal will suggest that excuse has been provided, it is not for me to say. But I can vouch for his purpose, which is to introduce cheerfulness and to exhibit that unfailing good humour in all situations which was his main characteristic. It is one of which we shall each, in our differing ways, have need in the weeks to come and as for cheerfulness, I felt that would not, at this juncture, come amiss. There will be plenty of occasion to read heavy matter in those papers whose function (however hard of fulfilment) is to keep our minds abreast with events. Here, in these pages, this spring, for readers both in and out of the services, it may help the heart to keep abreast of the demands made on it if we recall normalities and the arts of living as well as the business of killing.

This is, therefore, a deliberately lighter number than



usual. It gives not the war but readers, a rest and, I hope, recreation during the spare time in which they will read it. If thereby it incurs the charge of irrelevance, it may avoid accusation of being guess-work, soothsaying, axe-grinding, vicarious suffering or any of the other manifold forms of war-bore, that deadly foe to peace. Those in this "sealed" island will not find the number unduly restricted, since it covers five countries, and those outside it may find something of which they are happy to be reminded. We can still go afield in our reading, and the home-sections are therefore followed by two Chinese stories from Hsiao Ch'ien's forthcoming book, rounded off by a gay Indian tale. India is not, alas, at any time a light-hearted land, but Dr. Anand's bridegroom, at the last minute wondering if after all he really does want to marry, is perhaps not so far removed from Farquhar himself, who could write in a letter, "A man can no more engage for his Constancy than for his Health, since I believe they both equally depend on a certain constitution of body," and if a reader feels that—that despite time and place, human beings are not so far removed from each other—then the number's intention will have been achieved.

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In June, it is an ambition will be achieved, for then Stanley Unwin contributes again. None will need telling how zealously and continuously he has fought in this war on behalf of books, those bound epitomes of man's mind. He is an instance of a publisher standing up and speaking out, for authors as well as for himself and his colleagues. I am happy to print a speech on "The Future of English Books on the Continent After the War" with which he opened a recent P.E.N. discussion. This is a form of planning that should be of major concern to readers and it is an expert who speaks on it, with our interests at heart.

## A DAY WITH SIR HARRY WILDAIR

*("His florid constitution being never ruffled by Misfortune nor stinted in its Pleasure, has render'd him entertaining to others, and easie to himself.—Turning all Passion into Gaiety of Humour, by which he chuses rather to rejoyce with his Friends, than be hated by any.")—Vizard, of Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's *The Constant Couple, or a Trip to the Jubilee.*)*

### I. MORNING

BLUE BELINDA'S EYE and flashin,  
Barbara's brown—but not with passion.  
Comforting's Clorinda. Barbara  
to no happy thought is harbourer.  
Every hope of love she'll hinder,  
yet 'tis she, and not Belinda,  
is my mistress, or Clorinda.

White Amanda's arms and ample  
Barbara's charms—to store, not sample.  
Merry is Miranda. Barbara  
makes of mirth abracadabra.  
She spells saint as stint, I'd squander.  
Do you wonder 'tis Amanda  
all men worship, with Miranda?

Grey's the world and while we wander  
gaily we'd praise a Gioconda.  
Praise is work, says Barbara—labourer  
making me, who'd be love's taborer.  
Absent joys may make hearts fonder,  
yet I know, I need not ponder,  
why my Barbara's not jocunder.

Red Dorinda's lips and crimson  
Barbara's, both as soft as damson  
to the touch. But taste ? Why, Barbara  
hoods her tongue to harm as cobra.  
But as long as coal turns cinder,  
danger lures. So not Dorinda,  
Linda, 'Manda, or Clorinda,  
anyone who from Uganda  
to Upsala might be kinder,  
binds like Barbara, God rescind her !

## II. AFTERNOON

Not for ever can a lover's  
heart hear love be denigrate.  
Nor his hand, that would uncover,  
cramp in greeting celibate.

Other eyes might offer shriving ;  
these that are a steel-grey gyving  
may deflect, what they set driving,  
to where warmer wait.

Ah ! be ware as well as colder.

Flames, scorn-damped, die not but smoulder.

Close your lips. Yet, 'cross your shoulder  
Fortune smiles—not Fate !

Still, none else would be fruition.  
Conquest there is here contrition.  
Know you own me ever ; only—  
less to own, the longer lonely.

Not for ever can the human  
heart persist in requiem.  
Frail we are, as son or woman,  
to maintain memoriam.

Life, that sharper name for leaving,  
loses joy but limits grieving.  
Wearily our wits retrieving,  
we accept apothegm ;  
Love that was delight, deliverance,  
ends not faith with flesh's severance  
and who gave it first 's forgiver, once  
new-shoots the stem.

As I weakly cease to wrestle,  
lest your thought turn thorn, as vessel  
see these others, for the spirit  
you exhaled and I inherit.

### III. EVENING

With what a milk-and-water love  
love those who can declare  
they tell their lover everything !—  
since, faith, in love they share !

I vow, and vow for once quite true,  
I scorn such snivelling plan.  
Like it or not, I tell to you  
as little as I can.

And more ; I keep as much from you  
as man dare hope he may.  
'Twould be unhandsome, in my view,  
to see your hair turn grey.

I've had my Sarah, had my Sue.  
I need not have my say.  
And you've had Alec, Hal, and Hugh—  
why prate our pasts away?

We both have lived ; there's little in't  
worth repetition's breath,  
and if we'd talk of joy, the stint  
would starve our speech to death.

Lovers should spare their loves the worst ;  
the good at best revise,  
and I, vocabulary-versed,  
know six short words suffice

from daily drudge to drain the rest,  
in short our earth to sieve,  
and find that alchemy's expressed :  
*I love—and so, I live.*

But, please, in honest secrecy !  
Or, shall we say, content  
that the confession should be sly  
of an admitted bent ?

Faith, plague you with my past disgrace ?  
Dare share your present bliss ?  
What insult ! More—when face to face—  
mad, to do aught but kiss.

## IV. NIGHT

Do not take leave to think one loves you  
while you love more than one ;  
nor make, because a certain moves you,  
that star both moon and sun.

Never presume our greatest guerdon  
fits goal, is aught but scant ;  
nor dare, unless you'd die, make burden  
of love as lacking's want.

Love is delight or else—God shield us !  
From what ? From *what*, my friend ?  
Why, from our past ! Which has not healed us  
till future holds no fiend.

ROBERT HERRING

# WELSHMEN IN ELIZABETHAN LONDON

By WINIFRED GRAHAM WILSON

NEVER FOR LONG at a time have the English had primarily English monarchs on the throne. After the Normans, and before the Scottish, Dutch, and Hanoverian dynasties, in the most fruitful period of English history, England's sovereigns were of Welsh blood. It would be no surprise to Shakespeare therefore to find many Welshmen in London, the more so as at home in Stratford-on-Avon there were a considerable number of Welsh settlers. "Among the names appearing in the records are those of Ap Roberts, Ap Rice, Ap Williams, Ap Edwards, Hugh ap Shon, Howel ap Howell, Evans Rice, Evans Meredith, and others. . . Apart from daily propinquity it is likely that the English inhabitants, young and old, would have felt a certain curiosity regarding people rejoicing in such odd patronymics, many of whom would have spoken the English language with a very marked and very 'foreign' accent." <sup>1</sup>

What held true for Stratford-on-Avon was but a mirror in miniature of the state of things in London. That there were men of Welsh descent occupying high places in the great city Shakespeare must have been aware. There was Elizabeth's trusted Counsellor "that big bony red-haired Welshman" William Herbert, the first Earl of Pembroke (second creation), who "could neither read nor write, though he signed his name in capital letters. He only knew his own language well. . . . When so many men who could read and write lost their heads Herbert rivalled Cecil as an adroit politician. . . . He persuaded Elizabeth to take up a Protestant policy." <sup>2</sup> He was behind, we may suppose, her decision to provide the Welsh people with the New Testament written in their own tongue. For, declared she,

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare and the Welsh*. Frederick J. Harries. T. Fisher Unwin. 1919.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespeare and the Welsh*. Frederick J. Harries.

*they be utterly destituted of God's holy word and so may remain in the like, or rather, more darkness and ignorance than they were in the time of the papistry.* Thus it came to be that William Salesbury was called to help and after a short stay in London he retired to his secluded home at Llanrwst, where during 1567 he did most of the work of translation.

Again there were the Cecils, one or other of whom had served the Tudors right from the time of the Field of The Cloth of Gold. Then a certain Richard Cecil was page to Henry VIII, and it was his son William who was Elizabeth's chief adviser for almost the whole of her reign. It was to William Cecil that Elizabethan Englishmen owed the extra supplies of fish in their dietary, the increased growth of wood for building ships, as well as the encouragement of immigrant Huguenots and Jews to ply, in this country, those trades at which they were adept. It was to him, too, that the doubtful "benefit" of monopolies was due, instituted more, it must be confessed, with an eye to the royal coffers than with due concern for the harshness of their reaction on the lives of the common people. As Lord Burghley he put his Holborn garden into the charge of John Gerard, who grew there those rare herbs and flowers in which his patron so delighted. Yet that same patron, in his old age and weakness, could write to his son Thomas that his appetite was so poor that he *supped yesternight on four or five leaves of an artichoke*. [Thomas, by the way, was robbed of some valuable property in the August of 1592 by a gang of thieves which included two Welshmen.]

Then there was Robert Cecil, the younger son of Lord Burghley, "a singular personage, dwarfish and frail with a bad spinal curvature, almost a hunchback. Outside his work he had no interests, and he has put it on record that even his duties yielded him little pleasure. His industry was immense. He was for ever at his desk. He knew and



watched everything and everybody, and knew how to use his knowledge. Thanks to his father he had," when Elizabeth died, "a secret service worthy of Tiberius."<sup>1</sup> Now the name Cecil was spelt in various ways. Once when Sir Thomas had his house robbed his name was entered as *Sicile* in the records of the case at Court. And this provides an illuminating link between the (then) more modern spellings and the ancient Welsh name of Sicilt, from the bearers of which the Cecils delighted to trace their descent.

But these are isolated cases. What of the general population of London? What exactly was its Welsh content? At this point it is only natural to wish that a Directory of London's inhabitants had been made in Elizabeth's day. Curiously enough, that wish is in some measure fulfilled. When some sixty years ago the fragmentary Sessions Rolls of the Middlesex County Court were collected, pieced together, and indexed, there were included in Volume I all the noteworthy indictments, inquests, and recognizances from 1546 to 1603.<sup>2</sup> To this was appended an index which opens up to the curious searcher a significant cross-section of the London citizens of the period. Not only do we find their names there, but their employments, their crimes, their diseases, their misfortunes, their dwelling places, the churches they went to, the clothes they wore. It is in short a treasure trove, containing so large a number of Welsh names as to make it clear that there were Welshmen everywhere: those who were slain, and those who slew; those who were robbed, and those who stole; those who disturbed the peace and those who toiled to keep it; those who employed servants, and those who served others; those who were illiterate,

<sup>1</sup> *Trial of Guy Fawkes*. Edited by Donald Carswell. 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Middlesex County Records. Sessions Rolls*. Vol. I. Edited by John Cordy Jeaffreson. Index: A. T. Watson. 1886.

those who could read and write ; those who were men of property and those who were vagabonds and vagrants ; those who stole bibles and other holy books, and those yet again who with tenacious zeal stood out as sturdy recusants against Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity, absenting themselves from their parish churches with persistent regularity. And this wealth of material all goes to show that Shakespeare, in his London life, must have had ample opportunity to develop and mature his already existent interest in things Welsh. There was even a Flewellyn among those London Welshmen—Nicholas Flewellyn. He it was who in the parish of St. Katherine's stole from Nicholas Hyckes a *Taverne Cuppe worth forty five shillings*. And scarcely a fortnight later, it seems that Robert Phillipps, in company with three other men, stole from *Sir Nicholas Le Strange, Knight at Saint John's Street*, a wonderful assortment of clothing and jewellery including *a nether part of a gowne of figured satten, a Gyrdle of purple cloth of gold, a payer of silke stockinges collar sea-grene* (and these were worth thirty-five shillings), *buttons of golde and perle, a payer of braslettes of golde* to name no more.

All sorts of interesting out of the way bits of information leap into vivid reality, showing how more than one noted Englishman of Elizabeth's day was affected, sometimes only indirectly, sometimes very closely, by the Welshmen who lived in his own city. Sir Walter Raleigh, at the time yet only an esquire, had, for instance, engaged as his servants two brothers, Richard and William Paunsforthe. He had chosen them carefully, practising his own precept of *entertayning none about him but yeomen to whom he gave wages*.<sup>1</sup> Now about eight o'clock on the night of the 16th December, 1577, these two men, with Giles Harmer and seven other disturbers of the peace, refused to obey the

<sup>1</sup> *Instructions To His Sonne, And To Posterity*. Sir Walter Raleigh. Printed 1632.

orders of the Watchers at Mount Mill Wenloxebarne. More, they threatened the Watchers with their drawn swords calling *Rascalles and drunken slaves cume and ye dare and we wilbe your deathes*. The valiant Watchers turned on them with intent to arrest them, whereupon the *nightwakers* assaulted the Watch and so maltreated their constable that his life was despaired of. And it was as a result of all this that Raleigh appeared before the Justice of the Peace the following day and went surety for the due appearance at the next Session of the Peace of both the Paunceforths, to the tune of a hundred pounds for William and a hundred marks for Richard.

All this might be beside the point were it not that among the Watchers was a Welshman, Humfrey Price by name. Further the records go to show that at this same Wenloxebarne a few years earlier William Davys stole *five spades worth ten shillings and one other piece of iron called a coulter worth six shillings and eightpence*. So Wenloxebarne, tiny as it was, with only a single alehouse, and forming but a part of the parish of *St. Giles-without-Creplegate*, could boast two Welshmen at least !

Some six years after he had acted as surety for his two yeomen servants, Raleigh was robbed of some valuable possessions. The thief stole *a jewell worth eighty pounds, a hatt band of pearle worth thirty pounds, and five yards of white silk called damaske worth three pounds*. And his name, Welsh without any doubt, was Hugh Pewe.

Stealing from Raleigh was bad enough, but to steal from the Queen was even worse. Yet once again a Welshman comes on the scene. On 9th August, 1600, in company with Arthur Sotherton, *Griffin Thomas*, late of London *Yoman* broke into the dwelling house of Richard the Bishop of London and there stole *a silver salte worth four pounds, of the goods and chattels of the Lady the Queen Elizabeth, the said Queen in her Royal Majesty being then and there at*

*Fulham in the said house.* And almost incredibly barely two months later William Phillippes, likewise styled yeoman, stole *two pieces of ordinaunce called Brasse Fawcons*, also belonging to Queen Elizabeth.

In the year 1597, within the space of scarcely four months, the names of six Welshmen occur in the Middlesex session rolls. One of them, William Davies, being in God's and the Queen's peace, was Assaulted by James Savage who *gave him on the fore parte of his head a mortal wound so that the said William Davies languished and finally died.* Morgaine Jones had a *parcel-gilt goblett worth fifty shillings* stolen from him. The house of John Harris at *Hollowaie* was riotously entered and the chambers and roomes of the said house injured and broken by a number of disturbers of the peace. At the Stonebridge in the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields *John Frauncis assaulted Samuel Morris and robbed him of a graye horse worth forty shillings eight hundred eggs worth forty shillings, three dead mallardes worth three shillings, a dead teale worth sixpence, seven dead larkes worth sevenpence and two dead hennes worth three shillings.* William Edwardes was indicted under a True Bill for stealing a *velvett footeclothe* worth five pounds and a *furniture of hare-coloured velvett* worth six pounds. But he, as did also William Davys, who stole the spades and coulters at Wenloxebarne, pleaded his clergy, read like a clerk, was marked with the letter T and so escaped the death penalty. A few weeks later, however, Edward Griffin was sentenced to be hanged, for he had *wrestled and strangled John Feylder by putting his knee on the said John's neck and twisting it to the point of suffocation.* The fact that Griffin pleaded no clergy is indication enough that he could not read, and so was one of the illiterate Welsh emigrants that abounded in London. Yet he was clever enough in his way, for he was chief locksmith to the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

The Peter Jones who on 16th April, 1591, went up to William Arnolde, who was journeying in God's and the Queen's peace to his father's house in Fulham, is worth noting if only for the mode of his address. *Syrrha Syrrha you with the long sworde stay for I muste talke with thee*, said he to Arnolde, to which Arnolde replied *I have nothinge to saye to thee*, whereupon Jones assaulted the peaceful traveller and in the ensuing struggle was slain by Arnolde as he struck back in self defence.

It was only three weeks later that Lawrence Morrys in company with Robert Jerwood stole two books called *Foxe against Osocius worth eight shillings*, six books called *Testamentes worth thirteen shillings*, two books called *Psalmes bookes worth three shillings and sixpence*, and two books called *Quintus Curtius worth three shillings*. And at an earlier date another (perhaps learned ?) Welshman, Morgan Jones, stole from a house in the parish of St. Clement Danes *unum librum vocat' a byble ad valenciam XXXs*. Not the same Morgan Jones, we may suppose, whose parcel-gilt goblet was stolen : merely a namesake.

Somewhat ironically, in spite of Elizabeth's desire to enlighten her subjects in Wales, there were those close about her in London who so clung to the tenets of "the papistry" that over and over again long lists of recusants were drawn up so that these offenders against the Act of Uniformity could be dealt with according to law. And in these lists a few Welsh names recur so often that they fix themselves in the memory : Robert Owyn, Thomas Edwardes, John Hewes, and Robert Hughes.

As a contrast to these were the evildoers who practised magic and witchcraft. There were many women suspected of being witches in Elizabethan London, but only two men were charged with practising *wytchecraftes*, *inchauntments* *charmes* and *sorceries*. Neither of these was Welsh, yet one has a feeling that as several among the women witches

were married to Welshmen, the husbands too had probably some knowledge of the magic arts.

Among Shakespeare's close acquaintances there are several Welsh names upon which one can put one's finger with ease. There was the printer, James Roberts, who entered *a book of the Merchant of Venice or otherwise called the Jew of Venice* for licence from the Lord Chamberlain in 1598; also Robert Jones, whose *Booke of Songs and Ayres* was popular for some years from 1600 onwards, and who in James I's reign tried to erect a rival theatre to the Blackfriars. Closer still to Shakespeare were three other men of Welsh parentage: Henry Evans, Augustine Phillips, and Robert Armin.

When Rosencrantz tells Hamlet of *the late innovation* whereby *an aery of children, little eyases*, take the parts grown men (viz. the players) were wont to take Hamlet questions him: *What, are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted?*<sup>1</sup> And here Shakespeare treads on very thin ice, for there had just been a startling Star Chamber case which had involved Henry Evans and Nathaniel Giles his partner, during their lessee-ship of the Blackfriars from the Burbages. Giles as master of the *Chapel Children* had seriously abused his powers of impressment. He had *taken* a group of boys, including four *gramer schole schollars* and four apprentices, for nothing better, it was alleged, than *the base trade of a mercynary enterlude player to their utter ruyne and disparagment*. One of the apprentices was only ten years old. He was apprenticed to a Welsh craftsman, *Peerce*, of whom we know nothing but his name. Of the child, however, we know that he was in Ben Jonson's own phrasing *the stage's jewel*. And so great were his powers of acting that when he died at less than thirteen Jonson wrote the lovely epitaph beginning—

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet*, Act 2, Sc. ii.

*Weep with me all you that read  
This little story  
And know for whom a tear you shed  
Death's self is sorry.*

Of Augustine Phillips we know very little. He was for some years a member of Shakespeare's own company. When he died in 1605 he left to Shakespeare, Sly, and Condell a thirty-shilling gold piece each, while to Armin and four others he left only a twenty-shilling piece. Of Robert Armin we know more, but not nearly enough. He was born three or four years later than Shakespeare, and lived at Kings Lynn, in Norfolk, where his father had settled and set up business as a tailor. In the November of 1581 he signed his indentures of apprenticeship to an Aldgate goldsmith. Two years later John Lowin, later one of his fellow-players, was apprenticed in the same parish to another goldsmith, Nicholas Rudyard. It is difficult to know quite when Armin joined the Chamberlain's men. Kemp fell out about the middle of 1599, and it is probable that Armin took his place a few months later. "There were but two principal comic lines in the Shakespeare plays before 1600. The one was of broadly clownish type—and belonged to Kemp and his successor Armin." Armin could, indeed, play the lean glutton to perfection: "He is also immediately reflected in the plays by the jesters Touchstone and Feste, to whom may be added the fools of *Timon* and *Lear* as well as Trinculo of *The Tempest*."<sup>1</sup> It was of Armin that John Davies as late as 1609 could say that he *continued wisely to play the fool*, and it was Davies, too, who referred to him as—

*. . . honest gamesome Robin Armin  
That tickles the spleen like a harmless varmin.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Organisation and Personnel of the Shakespeare Company*. Thomas Whitfield Baldwin. Oxford University Press. 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of the Principal Actors in the Plays of Shakespeare*. J. Payne Collier. 1846.

Armin, however, was playwright as well as player, or so it is generally thought, as he is believed to be the author of *The Valiant Welshman*. He was a pamphleteer, too, his *A Brief Resolution of the Right Religion* being printed in 1590. He was, it seems, interested in poisoning cases for he wrote an epistle as preface to Gilbert Dugdale's *True Discourse of the practices of Elizabeth Caldwell, Mr. Jeffrey Bownd, Isabell Hull widdow, and George Fernely in order to poison Thomas Caldwell in Cheshire*. His interest is more understandable when one remembers that poisoning cases in this country in Elizabeth's day were rare, common substances such as ratsbane being those most in use.

There is no doubt that interest in things Welsh was greatly heightened in the late sixteenth century, and naturally so, when the greatest of Welsh sovereigns sat on the throne. Ben Jonson wanted to learn Welsh and tried hard to get a good Welsh grammar. But Jonson was adept not only with the goose-quill but with the rapier, *gladium de ferro and calibe*, as witness his duel with Gabriel Spencer in 1598, in which Spencer was killed. Who gave Jonson his skill with his weapon? Indeed, who taught the hundreds of other Londoners the art of thrust and parry? Welshmen again! And we can name them, too: William Mathewes, of St. Sepulchres; John David, of St. Ethelburgh's; and John Harris, of Creechurch, each of them worthy to be styled *magister nobilissima scientia defensionis*.

So Welshmen in London in Gower's phrase could do more than *handle an English cudgel*. They could even *let a Welsh correction teach a good English condition*<sup>1</sup> with a rapier: a weapon of infinitely more subtle quality in its fine tempering than anything of wood could ever be.



## FULWELL

O MINE, O tension in the main  
Unmoving helplessness, O pain  
Untenable but shaped as round  
And equal as the ungiving ground,  
How may I hold, then, tell me,  
Hold this great drop from the sound  
Of misery, keep me so that I feel  
Not empty, not feel passionless and punished?  
Deep,  
Yes, deeper the well the dippers seal  
Than open, giving back the wound.

For this is fullness, this. Whoever comes  
Can lower nothing that will hold,  
Can lift no cold cord off the thumbs  
Of gravity. No one but you and you bold  
Can lean chafing the worn edge and peer  
Where numb the noticeable orb is cold  
And moveless, under the ledge the moon  
And the water near.

O pain, near pain, how may I hold?  
Pain, you that are dear and far,  
Here, pain, am I bold and plain:  
All of me, full of me, deep of me,  
Far and not looking, dear and not caring,  
Holder and keeper, your near well daring  
Deeper than many, bolder than most,  
Wearies with water, the cords and the fraying,  
Come, saying, lostheart, come to the sharing,  
The drop pentecost!

\* \* \* \*

I will speak to the quiet, to you sparing  
The tongues my moveless water makes,  
To you tossed in the quiet  
Beyond the pain.

Now I have seen your lane, your leaves,  
The slow quartering of your Cotswold sun  
Around the eaves, dusk in the lane  
And the grave dolmen by it,  
I have brought my pain in a piece,  
My groan in a drop, the unrelease run  
Great to the well in the quiet  
And filling the well there you have forgotten.

I am from far, but you are farther  
Behind the silence than I believed,  
Not here with the moon and the pain  
Of the well.

I move. I am still, rather.  
Only the moonlight heaved.  
The quiet is yours and the slow plain  
Song of the heart bereaved.

Come, I am moveless.  
Come gather me, waiting  
The winter for drawing, the deep for taking  
The moon up in heartfuls, me mindless and hating  
The heap of wet leaves, the creep of November  
Cold in the little lane. Leap, silence, closer,  
this way, I am waiting  
The chafe of your coming  
The chill of each member . . . O  
Willing the rope and the great drop breaking.

ROLAND MATHIAS

# THE SCOTTISH LITERARY REVIVAL

By J. B. PICK

TRUE SCOTTISH POETRY is that of Scotland's Golden Age of literature—Henryson, Douglas, Dunbar—and beyond that little more than Burns. The other Scots poets are never of major importance—Macpherson, Ramsay, Cunningham; while the remainder are in their poetry if not by birth, rather English than Scottish: Drummond, Campbell, Davidson.

Now, however, we are witnessing a Scottish renaissance, within half a century of the Irish and almost completely contemporary with a similar Celtic revival in Wales.

There is no doubt that literary renaissance comes hand in hand with political nationalism. Nationalism is a great progenitor of art if it is a true nationalism—that is, a historical necessity born of the people's need.

England had her nationalist renaissance in the time of Elizabeth, Germany in the nineteenth century. After this stage a country's culture must become either individualist, European, international, or attached to some ideal such as Christianity—an abstraction beyond pure nationalism.

Scotland, ever since the last war, has been an oppressed nation, and has managed to throw the blame not internationally upon capitalism, but nationally upon England—blaming the continued capitalization of Scotland upon the English.

This is in a measure true, and is in fact the reason for the rise of Scottish nationalism and a literature that can take it by the hand. While Scotland was prospering industrially the complaints of the poverty-stricken and dispossessed Highlanders were ignored by the rich Lowlands. When, however, the two great Lowland industries of shipbuilding and coal-mining suffered, after the war, a tremendous decline, and thousands were idle in the big

cities, these voices were joined to those of the Highlanders and a scapegoat was found in England. I do not mean that capitalism as an evil was ignored—far from it. There was no town more “red” than Glasgow at that time. But capitalism and England were linked together.

Norway, in many ways akin to Scotland in physical features and aboriginal occupations, though lacking the Lowland industrial areas, has shown enormous enterprise in its valleys and small communities—developing water-power and communal life, and also producing more writers per thousand of the population than any other nation. Decentralization and co-operation have made Norway a happy and a fairly prosperous country—at least until the German incursion. But Scotland, far from London, has been killed by centralization of Government, first in Whitehall and second in the Lowlands.

The Nationalists have seen this. They advocate decentralization and federalism. This is, indeed, the only solution for the world if it wishes to preserve from the incursions of the State the identity of the human individual. Centralism leads to power and power to the destruction of individual, and therefore artistic, values. The Scot is an individualist, especially the Highland Scot.

The solution would be a federated Scotland with a Scottish capital. Westminster cannot be interested sufficiently in the decay of this country: Scottish members are in the minority, there are other things to think about, and the problem is a difficult one, therefore to be avoided. Scottish affairs have been mismanaged and neglected. The result has been emigration and decline, with a north far more barren than ever it need have been.

With this nationalist resurgence came the literary revival. Any uprush of feeling in a community produces artists. A community without them is dead. The number of artists in a nation are a measure of its inner vitality. Once active

these men lead the community whether the people know it or not. They prophesy the future paths their compatriots will take by their own present position.

Hugh MacDiarmid was a forerunner, much before his time. Perhaps too much to realize now as deeply as he might that an artistic renaissance has grown up around him—a renaissance by painters and writers some of whom may, indeed, live in England—as they have been forced to do by economic necessity—but who turn their attention to their birthplace. Their work has a Scottish character.

How different these young men are from predecessors who, though Scottish and proud of it, could not have the feeling of communal backing that they feel is theirs, is obvious from a consideration of their work. R. B. Cunningham-Graham supported Scottish Nationalism in its early days, but then it was just a dream. Now it is more than a dream. Men like Barrie merely exploited Scotland as a subject: Barrie's early tales are not Scottish, but pseudo-Scottish, which fact would not have seemed important to their author.

Eric Linklater, A. G. Macdonnell, Compton Mackenzie, though aware of the importance of being Scottish, were also aware that Scottish Nationalism was not a force, and they had their individual Scottish name to make. For them there was no alternative—they wrote for England. Macdonnell and Mackenzie, indeed, were Nationalists, and Mackenzie a founder of the Party, but their voices were crying in the wilderness—a wilderness loudly peopled by Hugh MacDiarmid.

Edwin Muir, a distinguished man of letters, has always kept Scotland at the forefront of his mind, although he has become a figure in the English literary world. His contemporary, Andrew Young, has not remained distinctively Scottish. Muir is, as Yeats was, a man who moves with the times. His style, like Yeats', has strengthened with the

years ; in thought he has been close to the movement that has thrown up on the crest of its wave such men as Douglas Young, Maurice Lindsay, Fred Urquhart, Adam Drinan, Ruthven Todd, Sydney Smith, W. S. Graham, G. S. Fraser, Sorley MacLean, William Montgomerie, and many others.

George Blake, the novelist, has kept along a path of his own, and has become one of the best known and most completely Scottish of them all.

The fact that this war has given work and prosperity to the Clyde and the coalfields once more may damp the nationalism of the masses, but the wave has lifted the writers and the painters—such as Robert Colquhoun and MacBride ; they have seen the light and noted it down.

It is doubtless true that for the most part they still address England, but they address England no longer as individual Scots artists, but under the impression that they are the voice of Scotland. And if they are strongly enough under that impression, who knows, before long they may be.

# AND THE TRAIN MOVED ON

By MAURICE LINDSAY

THE ENGINE CAUTIOUSLY tested the weight of its load, paused, gathered its strength, and slowly pulled the twenty crowded coaches out from the platform. Windows were adjusted, compartment doors banged shut, and books brought down from luggage racks.

She was in a corner seat, facing the engine, and had just opened her book at the first page, when the man in the opposite seat spoke.

"I know this must sound awfully silly," he said, "but would you mind if we changed seats? Every time I travel with my back to the engine I—I get terribly depressed. It's the result of an accident."

She lifted her attention from the book and saw an anxious boyish face, watching her lips for the answer. He had a sensitive, twitching mouth, and eyes which looked greyer than his years. She felt that his youthfulness had been tempered by some bitter, inevitable suffering.

"Certainly," she replied, gathering her rug and getting up. "It doesn't matter to me which way I sit."

"Thank you very much indeed," he said, obviously relieved. "It's very kind of you to be so considerate."

She saw that he was a Pilot Officer.

The other occupants of the compartment took no notice. A fat Army officer had distributed his weight as evenly as possible over one corner, and was already asleep. His mouth hung slightly open, and his khaki stomach moved up and down to the audible rhythm of his breathing. In the other corner, an elderly lady knitted. She was deaf, and wore a beetle-like black cap over her left ear. A middle-aged man and woman filled the two centre seats. The man's face was smug and successful. His case in the rack above was jigsawed with Continental travel labels, carefully

varnished. The woman was badly made-up, and the cracks in her face left her with an expression dried of all human pity. The man and the woman were deeply engaged in their books. The Pilot Officer shifted restlessly in his seat.

For a time she lay back and watched them. Once the Army officer stirred, opened his eyes, closed his mouth, and fell back into sleep again. Then the deaf lady tucked her knitting into a loudly scented handbag, and pushed herself into the extreme corner of her seat. One after the other, the couple finished reading and settled down for the night. The husband reached out a shirt-sleeved arm and plucked out the light above his seat.

The Pilot Officer slouched the next hour away. His head fell forward until his golden hair seemed like a luxuriant chrysanthemum: then he jerked himself alert, and glanced round the compartment. His head fell forward again. She noticed that the clean outline of his brow was broken with sweat. He looked tired, and yet he seemed quite unable to sleep. She could not sleep either: the strain was beginning to tell. It was six weeks now since Freddie had gone over, and still there was no news. Not unlike Freddie either, she thought, as she looked at his white wings. I wonder how old the boy is?

He sensed that she was staring at him.

"I hope I'm not annoying you with my cigarette?" he asked.

"Not at all," she answered quickly. "As a matter of fact, I can't get to sleep."

"Neither can I," he said. "When I do manage to doze over it comes before me, as clear as a Japanese print, and I vow that I'll never let myself sleep again."

"I'm sorry," she said sympathetically. "It's not as bad as that with me. Usually I'm a good sleeper, but I've been a bit worried lately. My husband—he's in the R.A.F. too—and he's, he's . . ."



"Missing?" he asked.

"Yes," she said slowly. "He's missing."

For a few minutes they were both silent. Strange, she thought, how one unhappy human gets comfort by confiding in another. She wondered what it was that haunted this boy. He fumbled in a pocket for another cigarette, and she watched the thin white fingers as they manipulated a match. The glow lit up his eyes. She saw the compressed springs of agony, coiled and taut: the match flickered out. He spoke again.

"I suppose you wonder what keeps me from sleeping, and why I hate travelling with my back to the engine?" he asked.

"Well, you do look tired," she agreed, "but I thought..."

"Some folk say that it has gone to my brain, that I am mad. I'm not really." The Army officer stirred.

"Let's go into the corridor, so that we can talk without disturbing the others," he suggested.

She hesitated. Her brother gone and her husband missing—she still avoided talking to people.

"I do want to talk to you," he urged. "I know you'll understand: and there are so few who do."

"All right," she said. "Let's go out."

He closed the compartment door gently. The corridor was blue and empty. They leaned against the brass window-rail.

"It's good of you to listen to me," he said. "Somehow I know that you, too, have suffered."

"Yes. I have," she answered. "But never mind that. Talk as much as you like."

"Well, the first part of my story doesn't matter very much," he began. "I was the pilot of a big bomber over Germany, and we were badly winged on the way home. We lost height and then we lost direction, and we crashed

in Portugal. Four of us came out of the wreckage alive. After some adventure, we smuggled aboard a ship at Setubal. We did not dare expose ourselves until the ship was well out at sea, for the harbour officials were conscientious and alert. When we came out of hiding, the master told us that she was a small Brazilian tramp bound for Brazil. For some days we helped the crew, as much as we could, and they were very good to us." He paused for a moment and twisted his heel over the stub of his cigarette.

"There was Peter Bell and Bill Donaldson and Jim Todd—all good lads then. The Captain had promised to transfer us as soon as we came upon a British convoy." His voice hardened a little. "But we never did. She was a little ship. One day a 'plane came suddenly out of the clouds, like an angry eagle. Our defence was useless. The 'plane carried a torpedo, and the little ship broke like a stick across your knee. We were flung into the sea, with two or three members of the crew who had been standing near us. For a while we clung to pieces of floating timber, edging nearer to each other. Jim spied a raft, and we swam towards it. Then the 'plane came back, cursing us with its machine guns. Jim was hit in the arm. Peter and I held him up, and we struggled towards the raft. Time and the sea's ripples seemed to conspire against us. Getting Jim on to the raft wasn't easy either."

"Oh, they are devils," she exclaimed. "Imagine machine-gunning helpless men in the sea."

"I don't know," he answered quietly. "If you once admit the righteousness of war, I suppose it's your duty to do everything in your power to knock the other side out. That's where these parsons give themselves away. When the other side bomb us, they are killers of women and children, Goths and Vandals. But when we bomb their cities, we're the cleansing sword of Christ! Of course, it's

high time that this religious racket was exposed in any case."

The guard passed down the corridor.

"When we had all climbed on to the raft, it sank down in the water, so that the sea splashed over it. The sea was fairly calm at first, and it didn't matter. Twelve hours went wearily by. For a time, Jim grew delirious; then he came round again. When morning lighted up, the waves were washing over the raft with rapacious eagerness. The quick wind warned us that the sea would soon grow stronger. Without food or fresh water, speech became difficult. The raft had to be lightened, if any of us were to survive.

"Peter thought about it first: we all knew it in our hearts. Then Peter said, 'Which of us has it to be?' Bill said, 'Let's toss for it.' He flung a halfpenny in the air, but it fell into the sea. I said, 'Let's wait a bit. There's still no danger.' Jim said nothing. He was pierced with pain.

"The sea rose, and night shook out a cover of darkness, ready to cloak it over our misery. The sea was a beast of hungry, countless fangs; to walk into this endless waiting sea, to sink, to struggle for life with this measureless force, and then to be pushed into the vast, unknown oceans of past, present, and future—how, oh, how could I do it? And yet I knew that I was the one. The others were married, I was single. Again, Peter said, 'Who's it to be?' He stammered, 'I—I have a wife with child,' his voice was cracked and empty. Bill said, 'Push me in. I can't go myself.' No one moved. I said, 'Let's wait a bit longer.' Jim, who was always the quiet one, said nothing.

"The minutes dragged their heavy chains around our heads. Jim spoke. 'How can a man measure his worth if his soul is for ever bound to his fears?' he said. We thought that the pain in his arm had driven him mad. Then he crawled to the edge of the raft and quietly,

deliberately, slipped over. His body went into the sea with a dull splash. He didn't utter a sound.

"We stared in silence. Bill broke it. 'Christ!' he yelled, and leapt into the sea after Jim. We heard his last frightened gurgle of breath.

"The raft lightened and rose in the water, and the waves knocked their disappointment against the sides. Peter and I were saved. Peter the coward—I the Judas. From then onwards, we hated each other with a fierce intensity, but we clung to the frayed ends of living with the tenacity of the tide. To have given in would have been the double betrayal. But Peter gave in. He died two days later in my arms, cursing Jim and Bill, a few hours before I was picked up by a Dutch destroyer."

The train screamed at a defiant signal, slowed down, and halted. As it gathered speed again, he went on.

"I, the Judas, the unworthy one who should have gone, lived. Jim was a clever scientist. He had a wife and child. Bill was a teacher, and a scholar of promise. He had a wife and two children. Peter was a clever journalist, and he had a wife with child unborn. I had nothing, nothing at all. And yet I failed to give it for their sakes. Peter at least paid his account: my debt remains."

He sighed and lit another cigarette.

"You mustn't look at it like that," she said. "The future is still yours."

"I cannot advance down the future," he answered. "Time moves under my feet, because I am inevitably chained to the past. I must give back what I owe." He coughed and shivered.

"Shall we go back into the compartment? It was very thoughtless of me to keep you here in this draughty corridor. I am sure you must be feeling cold."

"Not really," she replied. They picked a way back to their seats in silence.

"I hope I haven't bored you," he said, with his tired smile playing from his mouth. "It helps me if I can tell my story to someone who understands. Sitting with my back to the engine, I imagine that I am being pulled away from the past, and from the debt I owe my comrades."

She paused before answering. With a quick, covered movement, she blotted her eyes with a handkerchief.

"No, your story has moved me deeply—and interested me."

Shutting the handkerchief in her handbag, she brightened her voice.

"Are you going on sick leave?"

"Coming back," he replied. "I am going on to night fighters to-morrow. May I ask your name?"

"Yes, certainly. Waters—Mrs. Frieda Waters. And yours?"

"Mine doesn't matter," he said. "My generation are the luckless ones, the proud ones, to whom Death means nothing and everything. We do not fight because we believe in tinpan, childish crusades; nor because we hate the Germans. We fight because our youth is endless and our Summer behind to-morrow, utterly lost in Death." He drew in a deep blue cloud of smoke from his cigarette. Slowly he blew it up towards the ceiling.

"I'm glad you have told me all this," she said simply. "I am of your generation. Women sense these things in their menfolk. I knew it about Freddie. And there is nothing they can do—nothing."

The train slowed down. He rose from his corner, put on his cap, and lifted his case from the luggage rack.

"I expect my account will be rendered again very soon."

The train jerked to a standstill.

"Good-bye," he said. "And thank you. Next time I shall be alone, and I won't have to make another choice."

The compartment door slammed shut. The Army

officer stirred. Strange, great waves of love and tenderness rinsed her heart. The elderly lady sighed in her sleep. And the train moved on.

### THE SHIP

HERE IS A ship you made  
Out of my breast and sides  
As I lay dead in the yards  
Under the hammers.

Here is the hull you built  
Out of a heart of salt,  
Sky-rent, the prey of birds  
Strung on the longshore.

Here is her rigging bound  
Nerve, sinew, ice and wind  
Blowing through the night  
The starred dew of beads.

Here her ribs of silver  
Once steerless in a culvert  
Climb the laddered centuries  
To hide a cloud in a frame.

J. F. HENDRY

## THE CURTAIN

HALF-WAY UP the stairs  
Is the tall curtain.  
We noticed it there  
After the unfinished tale.

My father came home,  
His clothes sea-wet,  
His breath cold.  
He said a boat had gone.

He held a lantern.  
The mist moved in,  
Rested on the stone step  
And hung above the floor.

I remembered  
The blue glint  
Of the herring scales  
Fixed in the mat,

And also a foolish crab  
That held his own pincers fast.  
We called him  
Old Iron-clad.

I smelt again  
The kippers cooked in oak ash.  
That helped me to forget  
The tall curtain.

GEORGE BRUCE

## TWO CHINESE STORIES

By HSIAO CH'EN

### I—EPIDEMIC

ONE DAY FATHER said to Old Hwang the servant, "The harvest this year has not been good. There may be kidnappers in the streets. From to-day onwards you are not to look after the gate any more.<sup>1</sup> You must only run errands and take the Seventh Master to school and back."

When I heard about this I felt thoroughly sore. It meant that I would never be able to run away from school, for although Old Hwang was supposed to be my protector he would really be my gaoler. I wanted to know what my going to school had to do with him. I didn't want a companion; I had the best possible companion, my dog "Hwatse".

What a nice dog he was, this Hwatse with the marking of a plum-deer! As soon as he heard my whistle, no matter how far off he had wandered or how handsome a bitch he was following, he lifted his head, pricked his ears, wagged his smart little tail once or twice and came bouncing back to me. Panting, his red tongue lolling, he would sniff at the ends of my trousers and the backs of my heels, showing me all his endearing ways. He followed me like a shadow, lifting a leg all along the road. If any of my schoolmates teased me he bared his teeth at the offender and showed off by fierce barking. But to be followed by dreary Old Hwang! I hated the idea, and yet I couldn't defy my father, who really is the master of the house.

"Seventh Master, do walk a bit faster," Old Hwang pleaded. So I began to scuffle the earth with the heels of my shoes until even Hwatse began to wonder what I was doing, and rolled in the dust to keep himself occupied. "Seventh

<sup>1</sup> In rich houses in Peking there is always a gate-keeper whose job is to receive visitors, receive tradesmen, and keep the front of the house tidy.



Master, please don't buy that lollipop." So I bought the dirtiest ones I could see, carried them home and told mother it was Old Hwang's idea. Old Hwang got into serious trouble, but he could never justify himself.

The next thing was that father said I was getting too big to sleep in mother's room any more, and so I was moved into the western chamber which was made into my room.

Old Hwang still lived in the porter's lodge. Usually he got up before daybreak to sweep the big yard, clearing away the snow in winter and the leaves in autumn, stopping occasionally to give a middle-aged cough. When he had nearly finished sweeping he would lean on my window-sill and whisper, "Seventh Master, it's time to get up!" When I heard him, even if I was already awake, I would screw up my eyes, trying to go on dozing in my warm bed, although I could hear his uncertain steps as he moved about the yard. Later, when we were walking to school, he would say, "Seventh Master, do try to get up a bit earlier. If you're late, I shall have to take the blame." All he got from me was a malicious grin, or perhaps I would ask him what business it was of his, anyway.

After the last class the entrance to the school was always crowded with servants come to meet their charges. Old Hwang usually managed to stand in the front row, searching among the human torrent which came rushing from the classrooms. When he saw me he would shout out in his hoarse voice, "Seventh Master!" so that everyone in the School got to know that I was seventh in the family and it became a favourite joke. If it happened that I was punished by being sent out of class, I would try to dodge Old Hwang and slip off to the playing field. When he found me he would do up my buttons like a mother, dust my shoulders, and see if anyone had chalked a "turtle"<sup>1</sup> on my back. Then he would sling my satchel over his shoulder like a

<sup>1</sup> To call someone a turtle is a common insult in China.

sack of rice, take my hand, and say "So long", knowingly, as we passed the school porter. At this point Hwatse would manage to disentangle himself from the crowd of my schoolmates and come bouncing to my feet.

On the way home I liked to have something to kick along, anything would do. If I saw a cabbage head I would try to kick it all the way home. "Seventh Master, you are spoiling your shoes," Old Hwang would say, and of course I would change my cabbage head for a stone. If my stone went under a cart, I would try to hook it out with my toe, and if it rolled in the wrong direction at a street corner I would run back for it. But if it hit the foot of a passer-by the angry man would stare at us, and then Old Hwang had to walk up to the stranger and confess that he, "an old fool," was at fault, and beg for pardon. The man would stare at Old Hwang, spit and walk on contemptuously.

One day Old Hwang asked me about the shiny coloured papers I carried in my satchel. I told him that we used them in the handicraft class, to fold into horses, pavilions, pagodas, and so on. Old Hwang snorted and said, "Do you have to spend good money on a foreign-style school to learn things like that?" Then he asked me if I could fold the paper into a bat, and when I said I couldn't he promised to show me how when we got home. That evening Old Hwang became forty years younger (he was really about fifty-five). He fished out a bit of paper, originally used for wrapping tea. We bent our heads together under the oil lamp. He folded the piece of paper this way and that, holding his head first on one side and then on the other to help his memory. Finally a miraculous bat with two sharp-tipped wings appeared, and when he threw it up in the air it circled round twice before fluttering gently to the floor. This surprised me a great deal. I had never expected this cleverness from such a clumsy old fellow. I asked him the next morning what games his children played at home

He looked at me questioningly under his worn felt hat and said, "Seventh Master, I am a bachelor, yes, a bachelor." Then he explained to me that he meant he had no wife which surprised me very much, as judging by his hairy chin he was certainly entitled to one. I insisted on knowing why he did not possess one, but he only smiled to cover up his secrets, and said, "Let's wait until the Seventh Master marries a beautiful, beautiful maiden. Then I'll come to you as butler if you don't think I'm too old."

"But what about you?" I persisted. It is no good trying to dodge a child's questions.

"I?" I'd never seen a man of his age blushing as red as a cherry. He bent his head and laughed; there was a shiny scar on the top of his head. He fingered a button on his coat and kicked once or twice at the stone step. Then he murmured, "How am I to feed her, Seventh Master?"

We both sprawled on the steps. He took off his felt hat and steam rose from his head. He told me vaguely about his past, how he had followed my father all through his campaign in Urga (Outer Mongolia), how they had fought the Tartars in the endless desert, how he was wounded by a Mongolian sword in protecting my father, and so on and so on. In the end I was so convinced that Old Hwang deserved a nice wife that I ran upstairs and begged mother to give him one.

"What's the use of my trying to give him a wife?" said my mother. "Your father used to suggest our maid to him. We pestered him until he got annoyed and left us without notice. He was away for a whole year."

"But why wouldn't he have a wife?" I asked.

"Ah, that's something you've got to learn," my mother teased me. "It's because he has a mother at home, poor old woman. When he was a little boy he had his palm read by some stupid creature, who told him, 'Broad beans in big handfuls; once he marries a wife he no longer wants a

mother.’<sup>1</sup> As he is a good son, he has never dared to marry.”

From then on I ceased to worry this stubborn filial son. I often slipped a sweet or two into his pocket, but after a day or two I found they were still there, sticky from the warmth of his body. He told me he was keeping them for his mother when he went home on leave.

Spring is the season for kites. As soon as school was over I would take Old Hwang and lively Hwatse to open ground, carrying my seven foot wild-duck.<sup>2</sup> I held on to the bamboo stays at the back of the kite while Old Hwang carried the winder. When he had arranged the string he would tell me to run off with the kite, choosing a place that was clear of trees. Hwatse would run after me, chasing the string or biting at my heels. When Old Hwang called out “Enough” I had to stop and let go; in a moment the kite which had been held so firmly in my hand was floating up into the porcelain blue sky over Peking. We waited until it was well “settled” and adjusted to the wind, clear of trees and other kites, and then Old Hwang would hand the string to me. What fun to see the jade-like sky all criss-crossed with silvery lines, and at the end of each line a paper-planet, a goldfish with winking eyes, a centipede with its hundred legs all moving! Some had harps tied to them, making music in the air.<sup>3</sup> But my wild duck always flew the highest, smiling down at the earth in tranquillity and content.

In the meantime Old Hwang was not idle. All the while his eyes were fixed on the kite, and his mouth was wide open. Now he would instruct me to let it go a bit by releasing my second finger which acted as a brake on the winder; the string would run out into space, rhythmically, like a waterfall, and the wild duck would recede. Then he would say sharply “Enough” and the kite after some

<sup>1</sup> A Peking nursery rhyme.

<sup>2</sup> A common shape of kite.

<sup>3</sup> Kite-flyers often tie harps to their kites.

adjustment to its new position would slowly rise up still higher. From time to time Old Hwang would kick the ground and say, "Seventh Master, the wind is turning to the south-west," which would mean that I had to change my own position.

For the evenings, Old Hwang had a wonderful idea. He would throw the reel over the wall of the house, then light a red lantern and tie it to the string. Slowly and steadily the red lantern would rise along the string to the sky, the most joyful sight I have ever seen. We would let the kite wander in the darkening sky until my mother had finished her evening prayer before the Buddha, then, no matter how high or how far the kite had flown, we could bring it back by winding in the string. After its exciting adventures in mid-air my wild duck would be just the same, except that it felt a little cold, and I would slip into bed and dream of having wings myself.

One spring, my father had to go south on government business. He told me to stay at home, not even to fly my kite outside, for he had heard that there were mad dogs about in the city. By his orders my kite was locked up in the storeroom and I had to play with my shuttlecock in the yard.

"Look, Seventh Master!" With his right foot Old Hwang kicked the shuttlecock high above the eaves of our house; another kick, and the feathered thing settled on his head, right on top of his scar. But while I was absorbed in my shuttlecock, Hwatse got ill. Often he lagged behind instead of keeping at my heels. He seemed to have something on his mind; I used to hear him growling to himself. I asked Old Hwang what was the matter. He was watering the geranium in the yard, and he turned round and looked at Hwatse, then said, "Seventh Master, spring is the *time*—for dogs and cats—leave him alone and he'll be all right." I thought it was a very mysterious remark.

But my mother had quite a different idea. She wondered whether Hwatse had caught the infection. Old Hwang said "No, Madam. I know a mad dog when I see one." All the same, on our way back from school Old Hwang assured me that he had made inquiries about a place where they cure "dog-madness". The Bureau of Public Health had set up a special clinic in the Altar of Agriculture. At lunch time, when my mother asked him about Hwatse, he said he thought he had better take Hwatse to this place to be looked at. My mother took no notice, and Old Hwang did not like to press her because it meant asking for money. He told me afterwards that he had some money left out of last month's wages, and that he was going to take Hwatse to the clinic. I contributed the money I had, with some more that I got out of my mother on some excuse or other.

That afternoon I had to carry my own satchel. I parted from Old Hwang under the East Arch, and watched him go off southward with Hwatse on a lead. During Physical Exercise I told a classmate that Hwatse had seemed rather "funny" that morning. A pockmarked boy leaned over and said with a horrified look, "You'll have to kill your dog at once. Our neighbours have just killed theirs."

"You shut up!" I was very annoyed at this cruel idea. "How do you know Hwatse has caught the infection?"

"All right, all right," the pockmarked boy said sulkily; "but you'll see that whoever he bites will go mad at once. Don't you take my good heart for a wolf's lung." Saying this he went off as though he was afraid of being bitten himself. I didn't bother about it any more. Kill my Hwatse, indeed! What harm had he done to anyone, the sweet creature!

At four o'clock Old Hwang was outside the school entrance as usual. But he looked quite different, and he was without Hwatse. He told me sadly that the hospital people were quite heartless. "As soon as they saw Hwatse, they

refused to let him go again. They said they must keep him there."

"So what did you do?" I asked impatiently.

"Why of course I wouldn't let them, Seventh Master," he said with his usual steadiness, though he was obviously very pale and exhausted. "I wouldn't let them. I took Hwatse away."

"Did you manage to get him home?" I asked.

"Yes, but they said the police would be coming to the house."

When we got home Hwatse had disappeared, just as I had been afraid. What was more, my mother caught hold of me as soon as I went into the house. She wouldn't let me go out at all. With her rosary in one hand she held on to my arm, saying "Hwatse has gone mad, completely mad. You shall never have a dog again. It's too frightening. You'll go to school in a rickshaw from now on. . . ."

The next morning I was awakened by Sister Hu, the maid. She told me that mother would get leave for me to study at home all day. Any other day it wouldn't have been a bad idea, but to be at home without Hwatse or Old Hwang (for the maid told me then that Old Hwang was not in the house) would be too miserable. My mother actually expected me to sit in my room and practice calligraphy while Sister Hu sat by me sewing.

"Where is Old Hwang? Tell me where Old Hwang is!" I pestered Sister Hu. She wouldn't answer, although I could see from the sad look in her eyes that something dreadful had happened. She said that my mother had told her not to talk to me about Old Hwang or about the dog. To pay her out I ran out of the study. I chased the pregnant cat; I caught the butterflies in the pots of geraniums. I did everything that was forbidden. Finally I threatened to climb the grape-pergola, and Sister Hu couldn't bear it any longer.

"Oh Seventh Master," she burst out, "Haven't you any heart? Your dog is dead and Old Hwang is kept by the clinic. He was bitten by Hwatze."

My restless limbs were paralysed then. Everything went black in front of me, as though I had been hit by a thunderbolt. Could it be true? She swore it was. "Poor Old Hwang. It was just a little bite on his wrist. It hardly bled, but there it is. They say he must be kept in hospital. Poor Old Hwang."

It was a long time before I began to cry, but when I did it gave Sister Hu away.

And since then, I've never had a dog, nor, for that matter, a better friend than poor Old Hwang—who never came back.

## 2.—THE GALLOPING LEGS

ALL THE PEOPLE who know Bald Liu say he's all right, except that he's bull-necked.<sup>1</sup> As a man, his heart is in the right place. When he gambles and loses he unfastens the heavy belt with the stitched butterfly pattern that he wears round his waist and counts out, coin by coin, the money he has earned with his "galloping legs", then hands it over to the winner. He never curses and swears as grumpy gamblers do. Whenever a customer needs a rickshaw to take home sacks of flour the owner of the Flour Shop points out Bald Liu among the crowd of rickshaws.<sup>2</sup> "This one I *can* guarantee," he says. "You needn't even write down his licence number." This is all because Bald Liu used to return a snuff bottle which the owner of the Flour Shop often used to leave in his carriage.

Yet, sad to say, this pride of his is almost as bad as an incurable disease; he wanders about the world like a lonely

<sup>1</sup> Stubborn.

<sup>2</sup> In Peking crowds of rickshaws can be found in the shopping quarters.



ghost. People who know him well often say that he deserves a better job than rickshaw pulling. But he quarrelled with his father over some small matter and there and then, early in the morning and without any breakfast, he left the house and joined the army. His mother only heard the story afterwards, and then she cried and cried as if she had been to his funeral: in fact the old couple hardly spoke to each other after that. In the meantime Bald Liu gallivanted with the army, Hankow on Monday, Tehchow on Friday. He never wrote a word home. One day in barracks when he was polishing his bayonet he had a row with another soldier. The man knew nothing about Bald Liu's peppery temper and challenged him. Before Bald Liu knew what he was doing his bayonet was through the other man's thigh. He knew it was serious this time, so he deserted and made his way in disguise back to Peking. He found his father had been dead for nearly eight months, and his timid and fearful younger brother had been married off to a capable woman. He could not stay at home, however much his mother begged him. So he set about taking a rickshaw on hire-purchase and so joining the "Rubber Tyre Corps".<sup>1</sup>

The first thing was to get someone to back him. Hardly anyone was willing to risk it, but after a great deal of wangling the proprietor of a "Dried Fruit Shop" agreed to put his seal on the contract, and then Bald Liu became the owner of a yellow-lacquered chromium-plated rickshaw. How he polished it! Even sucking his mother's milk as a baby he couldn't have used more energy. He crawled underneath, opening his mouth like a great cave and dimming the plated foot-lamps with his warm human breath, then polishing them with a rag. As he did this he would tilt his bald head this way and that to see the effect. People passing would often call out over their shoulders

<sup>1</sup> Peking nickname for rickshawmen.

"Ease off a bit, Bald Liu. You're only a wet-nurse to that baby." When he heard things like this Bald Liu would shake the dust out of his rag and call back "Eight dollars a month. I've already paid my fifth instalment. Why! in thirteen months it will be mine. You just wait and see!" And the officious person would mutter to himself as he went on, "Five months! I've known people who've paid eleven months, and even then if you miss a month the rickshaw goes back to its real owner. Either you buy a rickshaw for cash or you don't buy one at all. You can't fool *me*."

Bald Liu could see nothing tricky about it. He raised his huge fists and hammered on his naked hairy chest. Muscles like steel balls came up on his arms. "Here are my tools and weapons, all of flesh," he would say. (He meant his arms and legs.) "And here is my rickshaw. I shall get acres and acres of land with them. Let the shop take as much profit as they like. I can make up for their meanness with my 'galloping legs'."

Bald Liu's younger brother, Liu the Second, was a gentle, steady fellow. He had been married for two years, and he and his wife still behaved with the proper filial respect towards his mother. He worked as a clerk in the Salt Duty Office. Every month he handed his entire salary to his mother, and he had no complaints at all about his life, except that he did not enjoy being addressed as "Sir" while his blood brother worked like a beast of burden. Sometimes as he sat at his desk this painful thought would make his brush waver. He was anxious to persuade his brother to try some other kind of work, but except when Bald Liu brought money to his mother at the end of the month the elder brother was seldom seen at home. Once or twice when he went to the "garage"<sup>1</sup> the Keeper

<sup>1</sup> A kind of hostel for rickshaw pullers. The rickshaws are parked in the yard at night and the men sleep in a dormitory.

told him that Bald Liu hardly slept there two nights in a month. Liu the Second thought it natural that his brother should "run wild" occasionally, since he, two years younger, was already married, but he could not help thinking that something "permanent" should be arranged.

One day he found Bald Liu by the roadside, his legs bare, sprawling under a willow-tree and tucking into a water melon. Liu the Second whispered "Brother!" But the brother was having a very good time with his water melon, and it was only after the clerk had called him several times that Bald Liu lifted his head, with his mouth outlined with melon seeds in the shape of a butterfly. "What do you want, old Second?" asked Bald Liu. The younger brother knew that one could hardly talk of serious matters in the street, so he asked his brother if he would eat some ice-cream with him. Bald Liu rolled up his eyes and said he had never heard of this damned ice-cream; he only knew "snow-flower fall".<sup>1</sup> The docile young brother said immediately, "Yes, let's go and have some snow-flower fall." So they walked into a tea-shop.

"Brother, you said you didn't like the indoor job I found for you before," the younger brother began, "so I have found you something else. What about being a janitor in a school? Although the pay is only twelve dollars a month, it would be better than pulling. . . ."

Before Liu the Second could finish, Bald Liu banged his cup down on the table and said "Nonsense. I told you I didn't want to be pitied. I feel grander than an Emperor these days. Besides, do you think I'd give up this rickshaw just when it will soon be mine? What's wrong with pulling a fellow-being about the streets? No one *is* a beast unless he feels one. You bookworms always talk such nonsense. Who dares to call me a beast, when I earn my living by my sweat? Tell mother not to worry. I eat three catties

<sup>1</sup> A native delicacy similar to ice-cream.

of flour a day, smoke a packet of Chickens<sup>1</sup> and sleep wherever I like . . .”

This immediately reminded the younger brother of another question. Of course, he could not find the courage to recommend a wife for Bald Liu, but he managed to ask, “Where do you sleep, brother, since you so seldom sleep in the ‘garage’?” It was a very delicate subject, and as Liu the Second was speaking he was afraid his elder brother might kick the table over. But Bald Liu only laughed aloud.

“Old Second, you’ll never guess. In the army I used to sleep out of doors, and now I can’t sleep at all unless I see the stars above my head. When I pulled my rickshaw on the road from the city to the Western Hills, I used to sleep on the stones by the pool, near the old Summer Palace. A breezier place you couldn’t find. Lately I’ve been working in the city, so I spend my nights in the elm grove on the Chang-an road, near the palace. Customers sometimes come out at two or three in the morning from the dance at the Grand.”

“But what would you do if it rained?” said Liu the Second. He was thoroughly shocked at the wild life his brother seemed to be leading.

“Oh, there’s plenty of shelter about. Plenty of ruined temples, verandahs, or rich houses, or shrines . . .”

Liu the Second was horrified. He had been afraid of ghosts as a child.

“Be damned to your ghosts.” Bald Liu took off his flowery jacket. “Ghosts only go for you bookworms. There are no ghosts in my mind, so they don’t bother me. The only ghost I mind is hunger. When my stomach is round and full I can look the God of Death in the face.” All this time Liu the Second had been kept away from the question of a “permanent home” for his wild brother.

<sup>1</sup> A brand of cheap cigarettes popular in North China.

He could only allude to it indirectly by talking about the doings of neighbours.

"Well, anyway, I shan't take on any such burden," Bald Liu commented. "Women are worse than ghosts. They make one weak. I shouldn't be able to pull my rickshaw as fast if I slept with one of those every night."

It seemed quite futile to try to persuade Bald Liu to drop the handle of his rickshaw. It was like persuading a champion runner to give up a race. The glory of it! At the tram terminus there would never be less than twenty rickshaws. A man would get off the tram, and all the rickshawmen would crowd round him, one asking fifty coppers, another only forty-five. Bald Liu would stand there by his shining rickshaw, showing off his tall body and his sturdy limbs, with iron muscles flexed in his folded arms. The traveller would brush aside all the offers, walk over to Bald Liu and say "How much?" Bald Liu would answer rather curtly "Sixty coppers". Then the passenger would walk up to Liu's rickshaw and settle himself on the seat under the envious stare of a score of eyes. Bald Liu would blow into his hands, take up the handle of his rickshaw, and in no time the rickshaw would have disappeared proudly into the distance.

From the first day he took out his rickshaw, Bald Liu could never be content to lag behind any of his colleagues. He simply caught them up and passed them one by one. Children in the street would get so excited watching the race that they would shout "look, here come the 'galloping legs'," and Bald Liu would trot still faster when he heard his nickname. But those "galloping legs" were a curse to him in his profession; at the back of their minds the rickshawmen hated the "galloping legs" more than they hated the burning sun in the summer, or the Siberian gale in winter.

One day Bald Liu found a hole burnt by a cigarette end

on the white cushion of his rickshaw. A few days later he went into a tobacconist's to get a light, and while he was inside someone punctured his tyre. The fellow in the noodle shop gave him good advice, saying, "Bald Liu, don't try to be so much better than the others. Remember you probably have another thirty or forty years to use your legs. Spare them a bit." But Bald Liu banged the bottom of his bowl on the table. "They only know my legs," he said. "No one has tried my fists yet. Let the one who punctured my tyre come out, and I'll show him . . ."

Well, a fine opportunity came along for the galloping legs. Someone specially asked for Bald Liu to pull him to a village about thirty li <sup>1</sup> from the East Gate. Thirty li was nothing to Bald Liu, so he asked for a dollar and a half. Strangely enough, this time there was no competition from his colleagues, and they all stood back. The customer even said that if Liu ran faster than ever he would be rewarded with a fat tip. So Bald Liu took a bite at a meat-roll, took up the handles of his rickshaw, and dashed away.

The next day someone came to Liu the Second with a message. Bald Liu had pulled his rickshaw nearly as far as Yen-chiao village when some toughs came out of the millet field. They beat him up badly and he had been found by a farmer limping along. As soon as Liu the Second heard the dreadful news he rushed out of the town without saying anything to his mother. He found his obstinate brother in the village inn, lying stretched out on an earthen bed with his mouth open. There was a small lamp on the table beside him, with a bowl of cold porridge and a bunch of plasters. Flies with blue-black wings droned about his face, danced on his eyebrows, settled on his lips, shared the little food he had. The sick man was asleep; he seemed as rigid as a dead animal. The younger

<sup>1</sup> Roughly 10 miles.

brother sat beside him patiently and fanned away the flies until the braying of a donkey in the yard awakened Bald Liu.

"Brother . . ." Liu the Second bent over and touched the burning hands.

"What . . . what have you come here for?" Bald Liu did not seem at all pleased with his visitor.

"You must have been wretched here. Tell me at once what I can do for you."

"Do? There's nothing to do until my legs are cured." His legs were red and swollen; it was impossible to tell whether the bones were broken.

"Brother, come home with me. My wife will look after you. You can't stay rotting in this place."

"No." Bald Liu shook his head. "Until my legs are healed no one can persuade me to enter the city gates again. I couldn't have believed there were such blackguards. I'll show them! You go back. Tell mother that I have gone on a long journey, pulling a client to Jehol. I may be away ten days, maybe twenty. Pawn all my warm clothes and get me some dog-skin plasters. That'll do the trick."

"But . . ." Liu the Second tried to persuade him, but Bald Liu hitched himself into a sitting position and waved his brother away.

The younger brother had not expected his visit to be so short and so unwelcome. He looked at the trickle of dust from the ceiling which was making a little heap on the earthen floor, he looked at the sandals lying under the bed. Surreptitiously he put two packets of coppers on the table. He wanted to say something else, but Bald Liu's proud, hostile look prevented him. Very unwillingly he pushed open the door, and as he was going out Bald Liu said, "Remember, don't tell the 'garage' people about my troubles. If they come to you for news, tell them I've gone on a long journey, do you hear?"

How stupid he was, Bald Liu. He thought no one knew what had happened to him, when his own brother had been the very last to hear the news. Everybody in the 'garage' knew that the 'galloping legs' were beaten; some said they would take two months to cure, some said six. When the proprietor of the noodle shop heard about it he sighed. "A fine lad, a fine lad. Only he's too bull-necked!"

As soon as the manager of the "garage" was told the news he rushed off to the proprietor of the "dried fruit shop", the Shantungese who had guaranteed Bald Liu's hire-purchase rickshaw. The Shantungese said quietly, "Take away his rickshaw if he doesn't pay his eight dollars this month," and from that moment the "garage" man counted the days.

Liu the Second knew nothing about all these business complications. Having seen the brand-new rickshaw standing in the yard of the inn he thought everything was all right. But on the 30th of the month, in the afternoon, the "garage" man came to him, asking for the monthly payment. Liu the Second was taken unawares. He had just paid in his share for a birthday present to a superior in his office, and there simply wasn't eight dollars in the house. As he was trying to scrape up something, an idea came to him. He had always hated his brother's job as a beast of burden, and now he could see a way out. So he offered to go off to the village with the "garage" man.

In the meantime, Bald Liu had been entirely at the mercy of a country quack whose only idea of a cure was to smother the legs in a coloured lotion. The wounds were festering and full of yellow pus. The room smelled foul, and tough Bald Liu lay moaning day and night on the earthen bed.

"Look here, 'galloping legs,'" said the garage man, "I've come to take back your rickshaw. Here's your



contract." He dropped the folded paper on Liu's blanket.

Bald Liu picked it up with a trembling hand. The former hero's chin was covered in thick stubble, and his face was greenish coloured. He looked pleadingly at the garage man, although he knew that he was not likely to be shown any mercy. Then he turned to his younger brother and said, "Old Second, you've always wanted to help me. This time I'll let you."

"Brother," the young man mumbled guiltily, ashamed at finding himself on the side of the 'garage' man, even if it was for his own good reasons, "Brother, there are other jobs . . . Couldn't you . . . ?"

Bald Liu saw at once what had happened. Even his own younger brother was against him. He tore the contract across and cried out in his feeble, angry voice, "Get out, both of you. Get out, you traitor !"

Bald Liu pulled himself up on his pillow. He heard the wheels of his rickshaw in the yard outside; the familiar sound of the lovely rickshaw that had been his pride. It seemed to him that the wheel was crossing the doorstep and running over his body. He heard the jangling of its bell, and saw its lamps like the eyes of a tiger shining directly in his face. His eye-balls were bursting, and he fell back on his pillow. In his dream, he went galloping along the Chang-an road, he and the rickshaw with him. Very gently, Liu the Second drove away a large persistent green fly that perched itself on the tip of Bald Liu's nose.

# THE BRIDEGROOM

By MULK RAJ ANAND

MARRIAGE IN OUR country is a very auspicious occasion. Though made and patented in heaven, through the intercession of the priests who can get access to God by way of calendars and horoscopes, it is actually arranged by the holy barber, the official go-between, who interprets Divine Will and all the high spiritual conceits elaborated by the Brahmins, in terms of the dowry, the shape, size, and complexion of the bride and bridegroom, and other such considerations. But the business does not end in the barber's hands by any means ; in fact, after the go-between has arranged the match, the whole affair has just about begun. For the doting parents of the bridegroom, and the bride, eager to secure the perpetuation of the race, then take charge and begin all those elaborate processes, the preparation of trousseau, the sweetening of people's mouths, and arrangements for the actual celebration of marriage which lasts months and during which the bridegroom's party of friends and relatives travel to the house of the bride and are feasted there for four days and nights with much pomp and ceremony. Somewhere in the course of all this intricate ritual the bridegroom actually sees the face of the bride for the first time, and then they live happily ever afterwards—or so they say, for divorce is unknown in the laws of the Hindus !

The moment when the bridegroom and the bride actually have a vision of their "fates" is so sudden, and fraught with such immense consequences for their lives, that one can forgive the access of curiosity they usually feel as the time of union gets nearer.

My friend, Mela Ram, was so excited on the eve of his marriage that he did all kinds of things which normally we would not have expected from so indolent and lethargic

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a person. Certainly he behaved very strangely during the journey from Gujranwala to Lahore, when the marriage party of a hundred was on its way to the bride's home.

Some five of us, his intimate friends from college, had got into an empty second class carriage, away from the elderly middle-class business men, the family relations and friends of Mela's father, who formed the marriage party and sat in the two compartments booked specially for them. Mela had bought us some whisky to celebrate the marriage in our own way, and we wanted to play cards. So we had reserved the second-class compartment all to ourselves by tipping the guard with a drink. We felt rather guilty about bringing Mela with us, away from the vigilant eyes of his father, Lalla Kahan Chand, but the bridegroom seemed to be bursting with happiness and seemed to desire our company anyhow.

At first he stood on the cushioned bunk of the compartment and, turning with a sudden histrionic movement of his right hand towards his heart, began to recite the "To be or not to be" speech from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, almost as if he were playing the title role in one of Mr. Sondhi's productions on the stage of the Government College, Lahore. Then, sweating and pale, he produced a copy of Byron's *Don Juan* and read several cantos. We were fascinated by his play-acting for a time, but were not in the mood to hear recitations. So we offered him a drink, withdrawing the offer immediately after, however, because we thought that it would be calamitous if he got drunk or even smelt of whisky by the time he had to ride the white horse at the head of the marriage party procession and be received by his prospective parents-in-law at Lahore. But we were in for it once we had made the offer. For he snatched the bottle out of my hand and put his mouth to it as though he were drinking soda-water.

After this Mela began to tell us some dirty stories.

## THE WELSH REVIEW *edited by GWYN JONES*

*The June number will contain :—*

The Shearing (story)	<i>Geraint Goodwin</i>
Poems from India	<i>Alun Lewis</i>
Alun Lewis, 1916-1944	<i>The Editor</i>
The Welsh Short Story	<i>H. E. Bates</i>
The Fifth Duino Elegy	<i>B. J. Morse</i>
Gallery of Grand Chaps	<i>Jack Jones</i>
Back to Cymru Fydd	<i>Edgar L. Chappell</i>
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We wanted to play bridge, and tactfully split up into two parties of three and started a game of cut-throat. He insisted on staying in my trio, as I had the whisky bottle in my charge.

• For a while we became busy bidding and counter-bidding. I noticed that he was playing safe and did not want to exert himself to take the initiative as he was bidding very low. While he was my partner against Teja Singh, who was playing no trump with the dummy as partner, I found Mela inattentive. We lost heavily.

At that he seemed to become very disgusted and, again, snatching the whisky bottle from me, swallowed several mouthfuls, spitting some recklessly down his neck. And then he began to sing a folk song. The tune was catchy and we all joined in. Soon we were all clapping hands and stamping our feet and singing at the tops of our voices.

Exhausted, perspiring, and half drunk we wanted to continue the bridge. But Mela did not want to play any more. So while he retired to the lavatory we all become absorbed in the foursome which Teja Singh and I made with Mukand Lal and Jai Ram, who were both accomplished bridge players.

The game was so absorbing that we did not notice the stations by which the Frontier Mail whirled past. Nor did we bother about the bridegroom after we had heard him orating to himself in the lavatory presumably his whole repertory of speeches and songs. The train pulled up for a minute by Shah-Dara station before crossing the Ravi Bridge because, it seemed, the signals had not been given. But I was losing badly and just then making difficult tricks against my practised adversaries. And, before we knew where we were, the train had steamed into Lahore.

We marked the score on a piece of paper and packed up hurriedly because there was an enormous crowd of hosts, friends, and relatives of Mela Ram's parents-in-law

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waiting on the platform to receive the bridegroom's party. As soon as we poked our heads out of the window a band began to play a martial tune to greet our arrival. At first the host of men and women on the platform rushed towards the special compartments, then, apparently on being told that the bridegroom was with us, they raced up like hungry cattle towards us.

I went and knocked at the lavatory door and called Mela Ram. But there was no answer.

I thought that the bridegroom was probably being sick after all the whisky he had drunk. So I banged at the door with my hands. There was no answer.

I instinctively forced the handle of the door as Teja Singh called back from the window, "Mela Ram ! Mela Ram ! Come out, they are waiting for you."

To my utter amazement the door opened as I tried the handle and I nearly fell in, only controlling myself in time.

"Mela Ram," I called. But it was empty.

"Where has he gone?" I whispered in a panic to my companions. "Isn't he in?" asked Mukand Lal. "He is probably shy!" "Or playing a prank with us by hiding in the lavatory," said Teja Singh. I said: "Go and see."

They all rushed to the lavatory and returned with horror-struck eyes and wide-open mouths.

"There is some mistake," I said to the waiting crowd to gain time for consultation with my friends. "He is probably in one of the other compartments." Like sheep they went hurtling back towards the reserved compartments.

"What could have happened to him?" we asked each other. And we were afraid that the worst had happened when the train stopped at Shah-Dara by the Ravi Bridge. We were certain Mela had dived into the Ravi in a drunken stupor, though none of us dared say so to each other or anyone else.

As we emerged and explained to Lalla Kahan Chand and



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the eager crowd of relatives how he had been with us and had then disappeared in the lavatory while we were busy playing cards, the faces of all of them fell and rumour ran through the station that the bridegroom was dead.

The band stopped playing. And, when, after a thorough search had been made of the whole train and telephone messages with the Shah-Dara station had been exchanged without eliciting any information, everyone was convinced that the bridegroom had dived into the Ravi, and the happy, eager hosts put on mournful expressions, while their women, who had only a little while ago been singing songs of joy, began to wail and beat their foreheads and their breasts.

All the five of us hung our heads down with utter shame, and the fact that we smelt of whisky and had obviously been responsible for the escapade through which the bridegroom lost his life made us wish that the earth would open up and swallow us. And, while parties were sent out to comb the railway lines and everyone set about doing his share in the search we, outcast for our misconduct, emerged from the station into the compound by the lorry and the tonga stand.

As we were deciding to go off in a carriage to the house of a friend, what was our surprise but that the bridegroom, Mela Ram, should come, seated on the front seat of a lorry from the direction of Shah-Dara.

Relieved but angry we rushed towards him, railing at him and shouting our remonstrances.

As he got down from the lorry he simply answered, "I thought I would get down at Shah-Dara and walk it to Lahore, so that I could decide on the way whether I should go in for this marriage at all."

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

*Edited by* ROBERT HERRING

JUNE

## EDITORIAL

1944

### LARGO

*(To all on active service overseas)*

YOU WILL NOT die, my friend.  
Your body may be killed  
and that will mean an eye  
closed and a finger stilled.  
But what behind them lay,  
live in our mind will stay.  
What urged and gave them grace  
will flower, though dust your face.

Not rare are ribs and hands.  
Limbs, head—all have the same.  
It is the golden strands  
in mind that give the flame.  
You, more than any one,  
are soul-in-action ; sun  
no shell can smash, no hit  
make darkening mean unlit.

This, this light you have borne,  
this gentleness through power,  
in us is acorn thrown,  
from hearts as oak to tower.  
Invet'rate in our brain  
your might extends our main.  
You cannot die, my friend,  
till all who knew you, end.

And even then your tale  
will ever greenly fruit.  
All you leave unfulfilled—  
grieve not, your soul will shoot  
branches through us, with choice  
of myriad veins and voice.  
Discipled we ; diffuse,  
yet rooted in one use ;

vessels of virtue—yours  
(that does more purely shine  
than others' portion) pours  
us, water, into wine.  
That wine, your blood, will run  
deeper than grave or gun.  
A cooling flame, warm light.  
None die, friend, who come by it

(Not even we, who will  
in some part of our brain  
if they your body kill).  
You cannot die ; but pain  
may your quietus quell,  
fierce may fall your farewell  
and sharper far than steel  
be, waiting not to feel.

Then, if black rains the blood  
and bones from skin suspire,  
if all by which you stood  
ache ashward into fire—  
find you your role reversed;  
once nourisher, now nursed.  
We then to re-inforce  
you, of our faith the source.

We wing a palisade  
against life's last distress.  
Our memory your grenade,  
dispersing loneliness.  
You, if it takes, will be  
not sole, but a company,  
of us, who from you learned,  
in thought, at need returned.

ROBERT HERRING

# THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH BOOKS ON THE CONTINENT AFTER THE WAR<sup>1</sup>

By STANLEY UNWIN

ONE THING IS certain, if past experience be any guide : it is that in all enemy-occupied territory we shall be confronted on the cessation of hostilities with the problem of meeting not merely a desire, but a craving for British books.

The peoples in all these territories (not excluding Germany itself) have for years now been mentally and spiritually starved, and there will be a longing amounting to a passion to learn of the life and thought of the outside world during the period of their isolation from it—an isolation far more complete and much more devastating than during the last world war.

The problem divides itself into three quite distinct parts :—

1. Translations of British books in the various Continental languages.
2. The distribution of home-produced British books on the Continent.
- 3 The preparation or authorization of special Continental editions of books in English on the Tauchnitz model.

First then, *Translations*.

At last year's Congress of the International P.E.N. in London I urged that translations of important British books should be prepared here and now, so that they might be ready at the moment of cessation of hostilities, when Continental publishers would be eager to acquire and publish them. Something has been, and is being done along these lines, as I was able to tell listeners to the French service of the B.B.C. The problem is also being studied

<sup>1</sup> The opening of a discussion at a meeting of the P.E.N.

by the conference of ministers of education of the Allied Governments in London. I sincerely hope that yet more may be done. But action on the lines I advocate is not without its discouragements. For example, I recommended an Austrian lawyer to make a German translation of an important English book, confident that it would be wanted. Now that the translation is nearly ready a most satisfactory offer for the German translation rights has been received from a Zürich publisher, but there is no way of getting the translation to him, and he is not prepared to wait until a way presents itself. However, that particular difficulty is unlikely to arise with languages other than French or German.

Before leaving translations I should like to say a word about translation rights in general. It is both a difficult and a delicate subject. But as during the last forty years I have probably bought and sold more translation rights than any two or three of my competitors put together and moreover presided at the special session of the last International Publishers' Congress which was devoted to "Translations", I feel under an obligation to speak rather more frankly than is perhaps discreet. At that special session of the International Publishers' Congress, publishers from one country after another pointed out that with translations from any language other than English they negotiated for the rights with the original publishers, and knew where they were, but when it came to translations from English they were nearly always referred to an agent, and more frequently to a local sub-agent of a London agent. Whether or not there was justification for the disapproval expressed it would ill become me to say, but it is a fact of which authors ought to be aware, particularly as in some cases the feeling was intense as, for example, where a Norwegian publisher holding strong views about the difference between Norwegian and Danish

was consistently referred to a Danish sub-agent who liked to regard Norway as part of the Danish publishers' market.

Then again, some Spanish publishers seem to have an intense dislike of dealing with people they don't know personally, a factor which needs to be borne in mind if you believe as strongly as I do in studying your customers' requirements, and not assuming that they will necessarily want to do business in your way. Admittedly there is relatively small financial inducement for them to do so, but how many agents have in the past made the slightest effort to establish personal relations with their Continental customers? (British publishers have the excuse for not doing so that agents always "reserve" the translation rights.)

The financial inducement varies from country to country and often affords little clue to the importance of a translation appearing. For example, a Swedish publisher could and would probably pay more for the Swedish rights in a book in which he was interested than a Greek or Roumanian and a Bulgarian publisher put together; but in view of the number of Swedes who read English, translations into the other languages mentioned may be much more desirable from a national point of view. And it is this national aspect of the matter I should like to stress. The importance of ensuring the publication of competent translations of the best English books in as many languages as possible far transcends monetary considerations. But here let me hasten to add that the sentimental author who, in consequence, gives his translation rights away in response to a gushing letter from a Continental admirer, does not thereby ensure the publication of a translation, let alone a competent one. The only satisfactory method of doing so is to contract with a responsible publisher, who will undertake both to have a faithful translation prepared and to publish it in a prescribed time. *Some* payment is always



desirable. The mistake often made is to ask "more than the traffic will bear". It is astonishing how difficult most authors, and even some literary agents and publishers, find it to assess the appropriate amount. A moment's thought will bring to mind the paramount considerations. The first, common to all languages, is that the cost of making the translation is a first charge on the item "authorship".

Then—

1. The size of the population speaking the language in question.
2. Their purchasing power, which includes not merely the standard of living, but the relation of their currency to sterling.
3. The proportion of the population that is illiterate.

It is clear that a publisher issuing a book in a language spoken by a comparatively small population, most of whom are illiterate, can only make a nominal payment. The important thing is to ensure that any payment which is not on account of royalties (and the scale of royalties must take into consideration the fee to the translator who is, in effect, part author) should cover a prescribed number of copies, and that there should be provision for a royalty on sales in excess of that number. In connection with a reprint of their excellent guide to Royalty agreements,<sup>1</sup> the Publishers' Association is adding a supplement dealing with the wording of agreements for the sale of translation rights.

In normal times there is not the slightest difficulty in ascertaining which publishers in the leading European countries are interested in the publication of translations, because the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation published each quarter an "Index Translationum".

<sup>1</sup> Post free, 1s. 2d., from the Publishers' Association, 28 Little Russell Street, London, W.C. 1.

The pre-war numbers, which are still obtainable, afford much interesting information as to the languages from, and into, which books of every type were being translated; but it is doubtful whether even a dozen people in Great Britain ever bothered (or bother) to study them.

But I must pass on to Part 2. "The distribution of home-produced British books on the Continent." This is a much more important business than even many publishers would credit. It consists very largely of orders for single copies of many titles rather than of large numbers of individual titles. Furthermore, much of the business is done through Exporters and Wholesalers, so that the publisher may be unaware of the ultimate destination of the copies he is supplying. The British book trade owes a greater debt to the specialized knowledge and activities of firms like Dawsons and Simpkin Marshall in this connection than is usually admitted. For all practical purposes the Continental booksellers drew their supplies of books in the English language from London. American publishers with London branches or agencies wisely dealt with this specialized business through London. Geographical proximity was, of course, an important factor; how important may be judged from the fact that books ordered at the same time would as a rule reach Amsterdam more rapidly than Aberdeen. The pre-war Continental service was extremely efficient. But geographical proximity was not the only reason that led to this business being done almost exclusively from or through London. Currency and credit complications virtually compelled it.

For the non-Latin countries Leipzig was the main centre of book distribution on the Continent, and those British publishers who took advantage of that unique organization in addition to working direct from London, were able to do appreciable extra business. For example, before the Great War of 1914-18 I was able to sell more

British books in Budapest than in a big provincial town like Sheffield. But let me hasten to add that I should not have been able to do so, had I not at that time been the only British publisher carrying stock in Leipzig. Had many firms been doing so it would probably not have paid any one of us. The cultivation of the Continental market involves more intensive and exhaustive work in relation to possible turnover than any other. To start with, it is not one market but as many as there are different countries, and each calls for separate study and separate treatment. A bookseller in Amsterdam or Stockholm may know more about British books than many an English bookseller, but that is unlikely to be the case in Sofia or Split. If the Continental market is to be adequately looked after when the war is over, as I confidently hope and believe that it will be, far closer attention will have to be given to the special requirements of the individual countries.

Facilities which may be fully justified in one case may be quite unwarranted in another. A book export scheme designed for the Balkans would be inappropriate to such fully developed and well-organized book trade organizations as those in Holland and the Scandinavian countries.

And mention of Scandinavia takes my mind to Iceland. When I was there a few years back I was able to report that in proportion to its population of about 35,000 Reykjavik had a better display of British books than any English town of comparable size. That market—a small one it is true, but none the less important—has recently been handed over very largely to America. When it is too late we shall doubtless bemoan the many needless war-time restrictions placed upon British book publishers and the consequent loss of these essential export markets. So long as the British book trade is treated as a Cinderella we are helpless, but given the paper and the other essential facilities we can, and if we are to survive *must*, hold our

own, because export business is for the British Publisher not a little extra portion of jam, but a matter of life and death. There is much else I could say on this fascinating subject, which I hope will be the chief theme of discussion, but I must devote the few minutes remaining to me to Part 3. The preparation and authorization of special Continental editions of books in English on the Tauchnitz model. Although even at its zenith the firm of Tauchnitz never published more than 60 new titles in a year, its effect at one time upon British book distribution on the Continent was almost devastating. There were many reasons for this, but first and foremost because authors considered it a kind of "hall mark" to appear in the Tauchnitz collection regardless of the financial aspect of the matter. It thus became a fetish on the part of agents to reserve the Continental rights whether or not there was the faintest possibility of Tauchnitz acquiring them. For example, some years back, negotiations for a book on agricultural co-operation in Denmark broke down solely because the agent would not allow me to have the right to sell it on the Continent. The fact that 90 per cent of the books taken by Tauchnitz were fiction, and that he never took a solid work of that character did not weigh in the balance. The sequel to that story was the publication of the book by a fiction publisher accustomed to agreements excluding the Continent; its remaindering by him about six or nine months after publication, and the subsequent sale of many of the remainder copies on the Continent. As the author derived no benefit from the remainder sales, but would have received full royalties had I been authorized to sell his book on the Continent, I think you will agree that my description of the reservation of Continental rights as a fetish was no exaggeration. I emphasize this because it contributed to the lack of enthusiasm shown by some publishers in those days in developing the Con-

tinental market. But with the advent of Penguins and attractively produced cloth-bound books at 2s., both fiction and non-fiction (particularly those issued by Hodder and Stoughton), the influence of the special Continental edition waned. Moreover authors resented being asked to sign a declaration that they were aryan, and for that if for no other reason would, I believe, prefer that after the war the distribution of British books on the Continent should be retained in British hands.

Fortunately in "Guild Books" the requisite machinery is readily available.

As it is a co-operative concern, to which all members of the Publishers' Association are eligible, it can draw upon a wide range of publications. But it seeks no monopoly, and any publisher with a big enough list to run Continental distribution on his own is free to do so. The important thing is, and this I must emphasize, that if British publishers are to be encouraged to develop the Continental market as they are so anxious to do, they must be granted by authors the right to sell their books there.

It is high time that authors made their attitude to this problem of Continental book trade distribution clear beyond a peradventure, and I hope that as the outcome of this evening's discussion those authors present will do so, and with no uncertain voice.

## THE CORELLI WONDER

By GEORGE BULLOCK

IN 1885 THE July edition of *Temple Bar* had an article, "One of the World's Wonders," describing an oyster-built grotto at Margate. Like to-day's film trailers, the title was pretentiously misleading, but the author, a lady from Kensington, did not doubt she had written something wonderful. Fair-haired, pretty, actually looking younger, she was thirty and tubby. Her scribbling was no sudden seaside inspiration, but a serious anxiety for fame. She was determined to be "someone". She had already given a concert, undertaking in the presence of the audience to compose a "forest" symphony and fourteen other "pieces". Even with Swinburne in the audience, the improvisation had raised no *réclame*. Now, paid ten guineas for describing a grotto, she wondered what a novel might not bring. In three volumes surely she could cause a *furore*? It would have to be a special novel—one of the world's wonders, in fact—for a "mere" person could produce one that was ordinary. Having begun to write, she was positive of a God-given inspiration. Her book would be a spiritual restorative to people less perfect than herself. Scorning "mere" life again, her imagination would soar celestially. The heroine (if she could be called by such a conventional name) would possess extraordinary gifts, but retain a perfect womanliness. The romance would be the purest to be had. As for "copy" (a word not mentioned in connection with divine revelations) there was herself, perfect and unique. She felt certain it could be done. In six months the spiritualistic concoction, filled with accounts of psychic experiences, healing baths, and supernal romance, was ready for the spiritually ailing. The publisher's readers (among them Hall Caine) argued its merits, but *A Romance of Two Worlds*, with an advertising

preface, received attention from the public. It was a respectable success. The author, Marie Corelli, had established herself as a doctor of literary patent medicine. Grateful letters poured in. One man had been saved from suicide, a lady had felt ennobled after reading it twice. There was a demand for more, which the copyright owner had every intention of supplying. She had a large store of the tonic which only needed bottling. Encouraged by Mr. Bentley, her publisher, who advised a love story *pur et simple*, she lost no time. In a few months another supply was available, and for more than twenty years new consignments rolled in. *Vendetta*, *Thelma*, *Ardath*, *Wormwood* (what did the title matter so long as the properties remained effective?) were bought by an ever-increasing public. The appearance of a new Corelli novel became an event. An edition was sold in a few hours. On the day of publication queues waited outside the literary pharmacutists, anxious for their half-yearly dose. Each time the mixture grew stronger, *Barabbas* almost took their breath away. By the time *The Sorrows of Satan* appeared the testifying letters were overwhelming. The Corelli tonic was famous, and some who swore by it were the highest in the land. Queen Victoria after reading the first novel asked for Miss Corelli's other books to be sent to Balmoral. Tennyson wrote: "You do well to care nothing for fame." Gladstone called on the authoress and stayed two hours. "Ardath is a magnificent conception," he is reported to have said. Meredith closed one book tearfully. The Dean of Westminster quoted *Barabbas* from the pulpit. Only the reviewers, "the literary cliques" as Marie Corelli called them, withheld praise. They did worse—they ridiculed. They sneered at the authoress's self-proclaimed divinity. As literary analysts they exposed her as a fraud. They maintained her tonic to be pretty coloured water. Her publisher's advice

restrained her from taking action, but even he had no consolation to give that could stop her feeling outraged. The critics, she raved, were leagued against her, and she intended returning that hatred. The publishers were ordered to send out no review copies of *The Sorrows of Satan*. Members of the press, she stated on the front page, could obtain it "in the usual way".

She competed with people like Ellen Terry for publicity. Self-advertisement, she declared, was abhorrent to her, and proceeded to campaign for it. The public naturally wanted to know everything concerning their benefactress, and their benefactress was very willing for them to be told, but certain difficulties existed. There were facts about her life that must be veiled. There was even a skeleton that needed draping. To give Marie Corelli to her public—perfect with wisdom, virtue, and purity—a little juggling had to be done. When necessary; however, the authoress could do more than juggle. She could be acrobatic, especially with facts. In the first permitted biography she gave details of her "mixed Scottish and Italian parentage". She was, she said, the *adopted* daughter of Dr. Charles Mackay, LL.D. There was no information regarding her mother. For herself she hinted at a Contessa's title. Nothing, it was obvious, was too good for Marie Corelli. But until 1885 there had been no Marie Corelli: in her place had existed for thirty years a girl called Minnie Mackay. What then of her?

She was the illegitimate daughter of Charles Mackay, an able but unsteady journalist and writer, who had been editor of the *Illustrated London News* and a colleague of Dickens. When her mother became Mackay's second wife Minnie (or Mary) was six years old. They went to live at Box Hill, where Meredith was a neighbour. For Minnie there followed some years of loneliness, without teaching or discipline, during which she formed her determination to



be different—to be “someone”. Many hours were spent in the “Dream Hole”, a mossy retreat in the garden, where day-dreams fertilized a luxuriant imagination. She decided not only to be different but superior as well. (“I *will* do something!—I *will*!”) Knowledge of her illegitimacy came to re-enforce this purpose. She would prove herself wonderful, better than everyone else, and a predisposition to narcissism helped to convince her that she had a good start on the way. When she was twenty-one her mother died, and shortly afterwards a move to Longridge Road, Kensington, made Ellen Terry a neighbour. At this house Minnie and her father were joined by Bertha Vyver, destined to become the lifelong friend—“better than gold.” Here household expenses were a powerful drive to Minnie’s ambition. It was becoming financially necessary for her to be “someone”. Even more agitating were those dreams of “Society”, her longing to drive in a carriage and to be known as a lady. She was growing daily more dissatisfied with Minnie Mackay. She was ashamed of her birth, her mother (who had been of inferior rank), of her ragged education, of her poverty. She was determined to forget them—indeed, they were already forgotten. Dreams as powerful as hers were astonishingly effective. She became another person. She became Signorina Marie Corelli. And in this lady there was no flaw. She excelled in everything in beauty, in birth, in wisdom, in purity, in intellect. Minnie Mackay had been short and plump, Marie Corelli should be stately and tall. Minnie Mackay had been illegitimate and poor, Marie Corelli should be aristocratic and rich. So she dreamed. Draped in white satin, adorned with pure lilies, soon the dream was ready for the public, disguised as Thelma or Mavis Clare, as the heroine of *The Life Everlasting*, or as Marie Corelli herself.

For the next fifteen years her novels satisfied a public ranging from the Queen at Balmoral to the front row of the

Gaiety chorus. *The Sorrows of Satan* had a sale greater than that of any previous English novel. *The Master Christian* sold a quarter of a million copies. All her dreams came true. She attacked "Society" for its sins, but no fashionable dinner-party was complete without her. She posed as a recluse and her publicity was enormous. She preached the evils of riches and earned £20,000 yearly. She criticized the Church, and its Deans quoted her appraisingly from the pulpit. The Prince of Wales held her hand in his, and invited her to his coronation. Oscar Wilde printed her stories in the magazine he was editing. "You tell of marvellous things in a marvellous way," he said. She was asked to write the life of Christ, the life of Queen Alexandra. Once, sometimes twice, a year a new novel appeared. *The Mighty Atom*, *God's Good Man*, *Temporal Power* were bought like a new edition of an evening paper. Her preaching grew more frenzied, her rhapsodizing more luxuriant, her attacking more virulent. With each success she became more righteously indignant at criticism. In declining health she retired to Stratford-on-Avon, meaning to establish herself Shakespeare's co-equal in English literature (so the spiteful people remarked). She interfered in local affairs and the Press resounded with her lawsuits, her angry letters. She floated down the Avon in an Italian gondola. On Mayday she drove through the town behind ponies wreathed in flowers. Her figure was so tightly laced she dare not risk a stoop. She quarrelled with the Governors of the Memorial Theatre, and pilloried them in her next novel. The Press omitted her name from a Royal gathering, then printed her letter of complaint. The townspeople at Stratford were irretrievably estranged by the so-called "Stratford-on-Avon Controversy" in 1903. At last, if not beaten, she was wearied. "County" folk, she declared, were her abhorrence. She was rich. She was famous. She was lonely. She was still dissatisfied. She

ignored the Summer Time Act and kept her clocks an hour slow. "God's time," she said, "is good enough for me." She derided matrimony; at fifty, stout and podgy, she had what she believed was a passion for a second-rate painter. "Pendennis," she called him, and he made fun of her accent. To be revenged she wrote *Open Confession*, a book with some moments of true pathos. She continued castigating women of fashion for trying to appear younger than they were, though at sixty her own tresses were still bright gold. But she was not trying to look young; perpetual youth, she believed, was one of the natural results of living on a spiritual plane. About 1910 her sales began to decline. The public had digested all it could take of her particular kind of phantasy. As a personality her antics continued for a time to be of interest. By the end of the Great War she ceased being a best-seller. A new literary druggist had appeared with a novel called *The Way of an Eagle*.

At her death in 1924 the name of Marie Corelli aroused only an echo among the contemporary generation. Her reputation as an eccentric among older people was great enough to constitute front-page news. She died worth £20,000, and directed her home, Mason Croft, to be preserved for ever. Books, furniture, curios, all were to be kept intact. But her dream of immortality was one that did not come true. In 1942 her friend, Bertha Vyver, died almost penniless, and the estate was sold. The pony-cart in which Marie had exhibited herself was bought by a theatrical producer for a London pantomime. The gondola—to everyone's surprise—fetched 57 guineas.

Her unimportance as a writer cannot be doubted. In another twelve years her centenary will be at hand, but it is unlikely that anyone will wish it celebrated. Her books are already unreadable, by then we presume they will be unread. A best-seller, in the novelette sense, once his or her vogue is over, cannot be read seriously, if at all; in

the same way as some present-day audiences get only satirical amusement from watching a film made fifteen or twenty years ago. As a novelist Marie Corelli was inferior to Ouida, with whom she has been compared. She had one pure heroine—it was herself she thought she was portraying—her other characters were ridiculous either from extremes of virtue or unmitigated wickedness. Even with her faults unmentioned she cannot be considered a novelist. Her books were an expression of her own day-dreaming, and primarily a compensation to herself for the exaggerated demands she was driven to make upon life. A reviewer—obviously a Corelli “taker”—has suggested the admiration of Queen Victoria and Gladstone as proof of her literary merit. Oscar Wilde and Tennyson were also reported admirers. But Tennyson received a presentation copy of *Ardath*, to which his short note was a reply. Wilde’s compliments were ambiguous, and a later judgment was that because of the way she wrote Marie Corelli should have been with him in Reading Jail. No doubt we should see kings and statesmen through a haze of reverence, but are we commanded to believe them never windy or commonplace? The taste of the highly exalted is not unquestionable. Would we not consider it absurd if asked to believe that a great man’s weakness for detective yarns proved Edgar Wallace a genius? In the nineties there were worthy people (Mr. Gladstone no doubt among them) nervous of the “clever” new writers who made “sin” so attractive. To them Marie Corelli’s missionary zeal and moral uplift were comforting and reassuring.

She must be judged as a supplier of daydreams, to people whose imaginations could not produce phantasies quickly enough, or splendidly enough, for themselves. The reason why she had an enormous public was not because she was “different”: it was her longing to be as like everybody else in general (and the British aristocracy in particular)

that brought Marie Corelli phenomenal fame. The Victorian Age, great in many directions, was not great in the apprehension of reality. It was an age that liked to consider its own solemnity. Religion was a sort of æsthetic fog, enjoyable if one watched it grow dense from the fireside. Sadness, of the kind evoked by reading *In Memoriam*, was a mournful pleasure. There was small liking for humour, none for criticism. In everything the highest moral tone was successful. Marie Corelli's writings satisfied a large number of people because they satisfied herself. In many ways she was a typical Victorian. Her "beautiful" descriptions, her use of scientific jargon, her incapacity to mention "sex stuff", and her fervent religiousness put all qualms to rest. Like the patent medicines, she could be given without fear to children of all ages. "The Million," as she called them, were able not only to forget the day's drudgery in her tales of spiritualistic trances and Italian Counts; they were left feeling improved. Of humanity in the characters, of humour, or of any connection with reality there was no sign. She wrote with characteristic energy, and a passionate self-belief gave her books their power. Her popularity declined when the public no longer reacted vigorously to her particular kind of phantasy. She was replaced then by a writer who gave the same kind of satisfaction with a different flavour, and in a more modern scene. To-day "the million" that might have rushed to buy *The Treasure of Heaven* go instead to the luxury cinemas. Or they buy one of the many weekly magazines, and get excitement from reading the *Daily Mirror* and the Sunday newspapers. The man who is saved from suicide now sends his testimonial to the manufactures of tonic pills and pain soothers. It is a smaller public, and a more worldly one, that Marie Corelli's successors have inherited.

## HENRY MILLER IN VILLA SEURAT

(*An Incomplete Portrait*)

By ALFRED PERLÈS

MÉTRO ALÉSIA : A minor *carrefour* : there is the church, and opposite it, the café Zeyer gaudy with red plush and mirrors, polished brass ; the smell of *choucroûte garnie*, *gauloises bleues* and *fine à l'eau*. That's the café we patronized when we were in funds, and we also took our better-to-do friends there. *Fine à l'eau* was one franc seventy-five the glass, and Henry did the talking : he was good at talking : any subject anyone might care to bring up would suit him : the range of topics was sheer inexhaustible . . . from "Hamlet" to "The Merry Widow", via the planetary and interplanetary systems.

On the other side of the Avenue d'Orléans was a smaller, less pretentious, *bistro*, the Bouquet d'Alésia : we dropped in there for an occasional *vin blanc cassis*, or a *café arrosé rhum* after dinner. We thought nothing of these things, but to-day, in retrospect, writing these reminiscences in a guard-room between two spots of sentry duties, wearing the crazy outfit of a man uncomfortably disguised as a he-soldier, they make the water come to my mouth.

There is no special reason why I mention Métro Alésia at all, except the fact that it happened to be the perimeter, so to speak, of Villa Seurat. Walking down the Rue d'Alésia and turning to the right into the Rue de la Tombe-Issoire, there is, or was, second to the left, a small impasse, called Villa Seurat. That part of the 14th *Arrondissement* was rather slummy : full of drunks, cheap prostitutes and Dead End kids ; but Villa Seurat somehow stood apart, even on the physical plane, it did not quite belong to the district ; the houses were stuccoed, or brick houses coloured pink, green or red : there was a gingerbread quality about them, as in Hans and Gretl. To Paris standards, the houses

were well-appointed ; large studio apartments, well lighted and centrally heated, bathrooms, kitchenettes, bedrooms.

Henry radiated from No. 7. Radiated is the correct word. There was a quixotic mood of coercion hanging about the place, like an atmosphere. On approaching, the least sensitive visitor must have become aware of an exceptional presence. I had lived with Henry Miller for a number of years, and yet every time I mounted the stairs to the first-floor studio I experienced a queer feeling of exultation and enthusiasm.

I seldom entered without pausing outside the door for a minute or two, listening to the familiar Miller noises within. As a rule, it was the clatter of the typewriter I perceived. Henry is one of the fastest typists I have come across among writers, using the touch system. He hammered away so fast, the uninitiated visitor might have thought he was just copying. Yet Henry often complained of not being able to put down on paper his thoughts as quickly as they came to him. He never drafts a damned thing : he thinks, speaks, and writes in perfect sentences, and what he writes down, stands, without additional polish.

He was not always typing ; at times he would be listening to a phonograph record, of which he possessed a good number ; he was a connoisseur of music : he liked particularly the great German masters, without disdaining the more trashy output of Tin Pan Alley. Sometimes he sang to himself, or gave the studio a thorough cleaning ; or he was cooking our dinner. Henry was a domesticated genius ; he liked order and cleanliness, always washing up the dishes right after the meal.

The door to the sanctum was stuck with notices and *avis importants* : " If knock you must, knock after 11 a.m." " Am out for the day, possibly for a fortnight." " La maison ne fait pas de crédit." " Je n'aime pas que l'on

m'emmerde." And so forth. He pinned those notes to the door because he hated to be disturbed while at work. But he never fooled me: I always knew when he was *genuinely* out: I smelled it.

Henry attracted, and probably still does, the queerest lot of people: there was, at Villa Seurat, a continuous *va-et-vient* of cranks, nuts, drunks, writers, artists, bums, Montparnasse derelicts, vagabonds, psychopaths . . . of all possible nationalities and sexes, and all of them came with their troubles. It did not matter to Henry whether they spoke English, French, German, Greek, or Yiddish: he was no great linguist, but he could take care of all of them. Somehow, instinctively, he seemed to be able to sense their true nature; he knew what they wanted and he also knew what they needed. Henry *gave*: he could always give, he was the most generous host, even when he was so broke that he had to treat his guests with their own money.

It was fascinating to watch him talking to the people who came up to him: minor sermons on the mount. Never talked to different people differently, as we all do: one language for all: his own. Some of the callers felt miserable for one reason or another; some just wanted a drink; others wanted philosophy; others still wanted to discuss art; most were out for love in one form or another. Henry, on principle, gives everybody what he, or she, wants. Only he gives them at least ten times as much as asked for. This is one of his characteristics: when a beggar approaches him in the street for a few *sous*, he would give him a ten-franc coin. Just to get a look of the fellow's face at his monstrous generosity. It is not simple kindness of heart; I suspect Henry of being fond of showing off—not to the public, but himself. Henry enriches everybody with whom he comes in contact: without impoverishing himself: every gift he throws



away seems to enrich him in a curious way ; on the material plane as well as the subtler realms of mind and heart.

The greatest thing about Henry Miller is, I believe, his capacity of instilling life into everybody he gets into touch with . . . even near-corpses : I have seen him working miracles on half-wits, and complete nervous wrecks. I don't know how he does it, he probably does not know it himself. Perhaps it is the mere directness of approach. A man, and even a woman, can feel at ease with Henry Miller after the first few words. After the first few words he cuts them out of their cocoons, as it were. Nor does it matter a scrap whether or not he understands his, or her, language. For Henry Miller, who is one of the greatest word jugglers of all times, never resorts to his art when talking to simple people in simple distress : he speaks the language of the heart ; he can listen to the voice of any heart no matter how bad the grammar may be. There is a Christ-like, healing, quality about Henry : he—the master of words—cures people of real or imaginary ills in the cluck-cluck language. There's no trick about it, no catch. The true miracle-worker requires no apparatus, no hokus pokus. Nothing is fundamentally simpler than the miracle. Which is not to imply that Henry Miller is unilaterally simple. Far from it. Miller's simplicity is of the calibre of natural phenomena. His enthusiasm is as simple as a sunrise, and as wonderful ; he can be as overwhelming as a *simple* hurricane . . . as devastating as a *common* earthquake.

I have met many people who know Miller's books, especially *Tropic of Cancer*, but not the man. They ask me what Henry is like in real life ; and when I tell them he is simple, gentle, almost humble, they cannot believe it. They get an altogether wrong impression of the man by reading his work. I cannot understand that, for Henry's work, and more particularly the *Tropic*, is written straight

from the shoulder . . . beautiful but not embellished ; nothing laboured, nothing put on.

I knew Henry Miller intimately long before his first book was published. And knowing the man, I could not have expected him to write differently from the way he has written ; if ever a book can mirror its author, the *Tropic of Cancer* does. Henry is there all the time, and all the time himself one hundred per cent. His whole being is poured into those three hundred odd pages, complete with suffering, humour, beauty, squalor, bitterness, ecstasy, knowledge, ignorance, hope and despair. The language comes from the heart, the belly, the mind and the testicles simultaneously ; it comes also from those regions whence language does not come at all, except, perhaps, once every thousand years : from the Angel. But it is all he, Henry the hermit, sufferer, saint, explorer, glutton, dreamer, miracle-man, quack and warlock.

During the ten last pre-war years I was almost in daily touch with him. Never once did I hear him speak harshly to anybody : he is good and kindly and patient. He can listen for hours on end to the unending tales of the most dreadful bore. He can afford to yield without weakening himself : each time he yields he grows stronger ; his strength and energy are boundless. He is fully aware that he is a torch-bearer, and he carries the torch both gracefully and with an odd kind of humble pride. He has a mission to fulfil, and he has not finished fulfilling it.

In his last letter, dated " March 6th or 7th ", he tells me that he has become a painter and intends to stop writing altogether. Henry has always been a painter. Long before he was being pushed into print, away back in '29 at 1 bis Rue du Maine where we then occupied two miserable rooms, he was already painting water colours. Even before then, in Brooklyn, he was painting water colours with our mutual friend, Joe O'Regan. Henry, a great believer in

relaxation, found it easier to relax in painting than in writing. He would paint astonishing still-lives of apples and oranges before eating them. Apples and oranges were only pretext, of course. So were the trees of the triangle du Maine upon which our windows opened—then the most beautiful triangle in the world: the triangle was alive with pristine life: kids and birds screaming insanely; beggars, bums, sandwich-men eating a meal of camembert cheese and bread and guzzling *gros rouge*, à même a litre bottle—a modest meal which even a beggar could afford, but for which to-day I would gladly give a five shilling *prix fixe* dinner plus the cover charge at a Piccadilly restaurant. Henry painted it all. He was not a good craftsman, but of course, he was an artist. His paintings looked distinctly and inimitably Henry Miller paintings. Only the naïve will have expected his apples and oranges to look like apples and oranges. Henry Miller gave himself in his paintings as he did in his books. So naturally the oranges and apples emerged tremendously enriched: so naturally they would not resemble cheap oranges and apples to be had for thirty *sous le kilo* at the Marché Edgar-Quinet.

In his last letter, he informs me that he hopes to be soon done with writing. Writing is a wretched affair at best, he says. He wants to settle down to painting in earnest. As a painter, he feels, one leads a totally different life: one becomes a man.

I do not suppose that Henry Miller had to take up painting to become a man. To be a man is a great achievement; most people are mere fractions of mankind. But Henry attained to manhood long before he made up his mind to be a painter, or a writer for that matter. Henry is a man and he is gentle. To call him a gentleman would be offensive. He is the born rough diamond polished into a million facets by the flux and reflux of life. No pose, no affectations, no mannerisms.

Last February he had a show in Santa Barbara—a flop, it seems. The museum director could not understand his work. The museum director was a moron, of course. Only an imbecile will claim to “understand” a painting. If Henry’s water-colours could be *understood*, in the conventional, cerebral, way, there would be no reason for him to paint at all. That is perhaps what Henry feels when he says he ought to stop writing and devote himself exclusively to painting. The writer is always compelled to formulate . . . to be articulate; even then he can hope at best to achieve approximations. But Henry Miller is no *homme approximatif*: he aims straight at the core of things, invariably hits the nail on the head.

Miller, precisely because he has conquered the art of writing, has no longer any use for writing. He has not outgrown literature, but he overshadows it: he is bigger than it. In painting there is still a struggle: the inexpressible offers new possibilities, new techniques, new formulae. As a painter, at the present phase of his life, Henry can tackle the Universe with a new serenity.

His books have won him practically no money, a little fame and much wisdom of the heart; which he is now pouring into his water-colours. The water-colours may, or may not, sell any better than his books. No matter. It is not the sale that enriches a man like Miller, but the work itself: Miller is, and always will be, the poorest rich, the richest poor: he owns his nakedness and his cross: and he supplies his own nails. In case the world is not ready, whenever Henry feels like a spot of crucifixion he will do it himself. He is the most amenable, the most obliging saint in the annals of sainthood and martyrdom. And this, be it understood, is said without the least attempt at sarcasm. Henry is a genuine saint: he has the genuine healing touch: he is the genuine martyr. But he is many other things as well, and whatever it is he is, he is it

genuinely. And it is his genuineness which puts the cachet of genius on everything he touches.

When I say that Henry Miller is a saint, I do not mean of course that he is a saint unilaterally. For one thing, he has a powerful sense of humour. The unilateral man of God, like God Himself, has no sense of humour. In order to have a sense of humour, a man must be first and foremost human . . . perhaps with a slight propinquity to treachery. Henry has got that, too : he is the most human man in modern literature : one-pointed but not one-sided ; he has a multitude of faces and facets imprinted upon his psyche by the multitude of experiences he has lived out. With his heart—and that is the thing that matters—he can grasp anything. His humility, or rather humbleness, is the result of wisdom of the heart. It is wisdom of the heart that makes him equal to all those with whom he consorts, without, alas, equalling them to him. Henry can rise and fall at wish : without affecting his integrity : for he merely rises and falls within himself. His is the leeway of a giant. He can abhor and love at the same time : enjoy and suffer simultaneously. He listens, and while he listens, the other fellow hears him talking in his own language, no matter how incoherent or inarticulate his language may be.

The enigma of Henry Miller—for an enigma there is, and one which Henry himself can never hope to decipher—has been implanted into him by some higher power : Henry is *instrumental* ; his instrumentality is ratified by the above and beyond : he takes his orders from elsewhere : every one of his actions is an act : he holds executionary power : he is a spiritual *fondé de pouvoir*. He obeys his masters, and they are legion. If his sole master were God, things would be simple enough. I do not know whether Henry goes in for praying in the conventional sense ; I doubt it. He is, of course, deeply religious ; a man of his

calibre is bound to be. But it would be rather embarrassing for him if he were to pray in the ordinary bigoted fashion : he would be at a loss to whom to address himself : he would have to pray *To whom it may concern*. For there are so many powers and principalities to whom he owes allegiance. As upon earth, he wants to be on friendly terms with everybody in the spiritual world : he is interested in all of them. The archangels are fine, and so are the angels, but there are quite a few rather interesting demons as well ; and some of the more cunning elementals are not to be scoffed at either. Henry will give them all a fair trial before finally surging upwards.

## POETRY

### ASHFORD TRAIN

RING ON THE winter pavement, feet ;  
Strike on the stone in this blank street.  
Torch and flare and guiding light,  
All are dimmed and dowsed to-night ;  
While Ashford train skims smoking south,  
And your hard kiss stings on my mouth.

DENTON WELCH

## STAR CHAMBER—I

WHEN THE COOL morning speaks  
its April language,  
asks us to brush our world plan  
into clover,  
what harm is done, my eager prentices?  
While we are sleeping later in the sun,  
the diving thrushes will obliterate  
all frontiers, all hate.

Yet if we turn, my Masters,  
to the School  
whose walls reflect  
a stationary tree,  
we rule this beautiful transparency  
all the lost day,  
calling it Power  
to bind ourselves to shadows . . .  
(Who shall appease the threatening feet of soldiers  
or make an orderly blue-print of the sky?)

Oh, remember,  
the many boys who sat in the cool chamber  
weighing grammar;  
pattering drowsily  
the long, lazy ladders of the Verb,  
are the obedient rows  
tulips or golden robes?  
Only the last comer  
(as the hanging blows)  
sees in the dragon's curve  
Iskandar's name.

BRYHER

## I SOUGHT IN ANGER

I SOUGHT IN anger for a peaceful heart :  
the heart of Christ I doubled in my fist—  
it could not beat between my caging fingers  
and it died there because I held it fast.

I struggled when my own heart swung and held it  
captive to the fingers of my will ;  
and all I won was only bitterness,  
a new lash biting on the aching weal.

The thirty golden sovereigns of my fortune  
that I had gathered each one in its year  
now wasted were, though hoarded in my frame,  
so little I had bought for so much care.

For I had only a dead heart in hand,  
another servile to restrictive thought  
that atrophied the channel of the brain  
and stopped the words that gathered in the throat.

Now at the trumpet of incarnate love  
one heart rebels, the other beats again,  
one heart burns in me for my private death,  
the other flames for what my heart has done.

And it is plain the foolish question fails  
that has tormented me, and to my hurt :  
the answer is in this experience  
that there is no such thing as peace of heart.

SEÁN JENNETT



## SECOND ODE

AT THE TURN of the year—and the year turns  
With Spring, not with the cold of January—  
Lovers, themselves as symbols taking,  
Learn what the old world never learns,  
    How to be happy,  
Gay amid torment, silent amid speaking,  
Turning to greet what truth they know, not blind  
To colder seasons, who but keep in mind  
    That Spring is kind.

O, heroic gestures, O heroic themes !  
I look at the wild moon that sails above  
The wind-blown racing clouds and see a face  
That is my own, the gullible, the false,  
    The fixed-in-love :  
It is the nightmare double of my dreams  
Shining down upon me with a ponderous beauty,  
Far above the world, a cold, heavenly body  
    Devoid of pity :

And I turn back to stare at the real face  
Of the world. It is new. It is breathing.  
I feel push through the germinating earth  
Those buds and leaves which never play us false,  
    Each blooming  
With fresh abundance every summer in  
The gold, the certain air. I see my breath  
That grew so frosty on the winter pane  
Devolve in rings of warmth, true as a stone.

It is the subtle, the simple year. O wolves,  
Whose claws bite deep into our history,  
I exorcise you. Here by some witchery

I turn stale hates to germinating loves  
Which move within me  
Softly like the white shoots in the earth.  
Here with the spring clouds high above begin the  
Bold architectures of life and birth,  
While the wolves slink away fierce to their death.

Yet it is the beast who sings, happy  
After his carnivorous feasting, the black  
Robber behind the bush, the dark  
Clown in the corner who is so merry  
Among the tall,  
Bright winds of Spring, who over all  
Casts his terrible  
Shadow, over the coming, the blooming year.  
On the statue's eyelids hangs a stone-cold tear.

It is the statue of event to which  
We make obeisance, the cruel, the ugly,  
All who have taken prostitutes, made money quickly,  
Or destroyed miracles with their death touch :  
Here they stand  
Filled with a greater terror than the mind  
Can bear. There bound  
New wolves quick to each wicked throat,  
Ready to reach their bright claws to the heart.

O clowns, O emperors, O boastful men,  
Doom hangs like a whistle on the lilac tree.  
The robin hops with new temerity  
As Spring rustles his feathers : once again  
The doom-shaped arches of the world collapse  
Above the lies that hang upon your lips,  
Sweet as treacle,

But powerless to stop the last débâcle  
With any miracle :

With any miracle of word or reason.  
For O indisputably you have made  
Half the world crazy, and good men afraid,  
Murderers, thieves, setters of treason.  
As the weather changes even the wolves desert  
And stretch their claws to take their master's heart,  
With terrible anger :  
The high boasts, the high cruelties no longer  
Withhold that finger

Which from the map of history points to  
You and you and you.  
It is the finger of the incredible statue,  
The goddess of Love,  
Venus who from the sea came in a shell,  
Comely and beautiful,  
Naked and pure and white and cool as stone.  
The lovers turn their eyes, and quietly move,  
Reaching this symbol, as they reach their own.

O heroic gestures, O heroic themes !  
I stand and watch  
The grim, the gaunt, the garrulous old moon  
Spin like a large balloon,  
High upon the feathery, the girlish airs :  
And as I turn I know that city famous  
Toward which at last my tender fingers stretch :  
The face, the statue's face, the face that gleams  
Illustrious and brightly luminous.

NICHOLAS MOORE

1944

## METAMORPHOSIS

SPILT HUMANITY AND earth, close-locked, made one by  
death ;  
together as lovers too long parted are one  
yet without the vain fantasy that passion breeds.  
The body is broken ;  
The spirit fled.  
As the musician strikes a chord,  
which is held resonant in the air,  
so the spirit drifts vibrating to a far space  
beyond man's imagination.  
As the body is cremated, so the mind and all thought are  
purified,  
and pass unhesitant, complete, to Eternity.  
Yet this return of the physical to the physical  
and the spirit to the spirit  
holds no finality,  
there is rebirth of existence,  
as some great work of music swells on, never to finish.  
The body of man is beautiful,  
and while the spirit inhabits that body,  
the mind rejects all thought that it will vanish and be gone.  
Yet its dissolution is sure,  
and the spirit throws it off and is freed ;  
as one about to swim throws off the clothes which cover  
strong limbs,  
and realizes the beauty of nakedness.  
As the swimmer plunges, so the spirit moves  
from the substantial to the unsubstantial.  
But there is no end, no finality,  
and as creation moves forward the music grows stronger  
and purer  
and there is great light.

ANTHONY NAUMANN

# THE OLD WOMAN AND THE WIND

By MARGIAD EVANS

IN HER GREY, blunted garden, with the gutterings of the long slidden turf mounding about her, old Mrs. Ashford was stooping over her broken crocuses.

"Maybe I can rise them up," she was wailing as she touched their bruised cold petals, "maybe. But what's the use when that old wind'll only blow 'em all flat agen?"

They were her only flowers—just the one clump of ochre yellow sheaths growing under the cottage wall as close and thick as if they were in a pot.

And even them the wind had smashed as it had smashed everything else. The porch, the fence. . . . Mrs. Ashford had nothing pretty or hospitable to look at; nothing but rocks that broke out of the quivering wire grass, and lay about like sheep. Wind! Mrs. Ashford growled, *wind!*

The air was stiff with it—solid and encroaching. Wind more than age was dwindling her sparrow frame. Sometimes it felt as hard and narrow as churchyard mould; others it was like being cuddled by a giant. Wind, always blowing, roaring, pushing at her and her cottage, shoving her out of her place, pouncing on her hair. Cursed wind, too big for the world.

Look how the grass was bending! That melted bank had been a stone wall once. And the stumbling gusts that harshly rocked her tiny body. And the flattened smoke coming down round the chimney's neck in wisps like her own hair. How she hated it, oh how she hated it!

Mrs. Ashford straightened her spine slowly, pushing her knuckles into her knees, her thighs, and then her hips. "Ah! Ah! Ah!" she groaned, "if only I could get away from here I shouldn't get old so fast. A nice soft little place in the village now, like what Mrs. Maddocks has. Or Mrs. Griffiths."

Mrs. Ashford was seventy-one. She had little to think

of after living alone on her hill for twelve years except her own bad luck. She was not stupid, but so ignorant that she imagined "Mrs." to be a common Christian name and the marriage service a sort of second baptism. She had forgotten that she was called Annie. Mrs. Ashford, Garway Hill, she was, and there she stood with tears in her eyes, stroking her crocuses and wishing for a pathway, box-edged, and a little orchard with a clothes line. It was the hour of evening, which seems made solely for the first slender winter flowers. The shadowless January twilight enclosed and shaped each contour with leaf-like distinctness. The tiny cottage, slapped with limewash, was built under a single flake of rock. Some bloomless gorse bushes and pale bracken patches, that was all. There was no living feeling, but only a heedless and violent solitude.

Under the slurred turf lay half-buried a few heavy stones. Swept and seamed by each gust, the old woman toiled up and down the frail track she had worn from her door to the gap in the mound. Each journey she brought a stone. These she laid round the crocuses lifting their golden pods: "There, now, if the sun shines, they'll open in the morning," she said when it was done. Then she raised her face menacingly and flapped her fist. The gesture seemed not hers but the wind's. "Keep off," she screamed. "Keep off 'em now. You go down there and break off some of they great el'um trees." She went to the step and rested against the door, arranging her dim dress and apron, gripping them down at the knees with fierce self-conscious modesty. She had a little screw of hair on top of her skull, a screw of nose curled upwards like a dead leaf, and small, clutching yellow hands that were always chasing the flying and broken things floating in the wind's wake. Somebody said she looked as if she were forever catching feathers in the air, and it was true that she did.

She turned to face the valley. The soft sound of it was going underground, but up here it was coming a gale. She could feel it in her heart. Every breath seemed too big for her. Her eyes followed the downward path to the village. Ah, it was always still there, always blowing here. Below the oak tree, where the round winds whisked the dead leaves in figure forms, the quietness began. Warmth, sounds, birds' voices. Up here she had to listen through the wind, but after the oak tree was passed things found their own way into her hearing. Voices, footsteps trickling from cottage to cottage through the peaceful lanes. . . .

It had been like that this morning. There she had stood and stroked her hair. She'd lifted her face and smelled the sky as if she were smelling at a flower. A flock of birds as fine as dust she'd seen. Then she had gone on down, cruel rage and cruel envy in her mind, tears in her eyes. Mrs. Griffith's daughter had cancer they said, but Mrs. Griffith's front path was ruled between primulas and violets. The sunlight touched the dark green box bush.

"Good morning, good morning," the ninety-year-old woman had nodded cheerfully. Well, Mrs. Ashford wished her no harm, for her son carried the coal up Garway. But, oh, the meadows, the gentle river at her garden side, made tired flesh drag with longing. Old Mrs. Ashford had passed on, not answering the human greeting, but hearing the water's poem, the crow flocks rustling over the elms.

Mrs. Maddocks, she was hanging out washing—sheets, Fred's shirts. This time it was Mrs. Ashford who stopped. Under the hedge, wide open in the grass of the bank, a constellation of celandine shone at the sun. Five of them, shaped, she noticed, like the Plough. She put out her torn, black foot. She wanted to kill their beauty. But she closed her eyes. The sunlight was red through the flesh. And then she had a vision. A white willow tree in a red world. It was an effort to raise her tired lids. Mrs. Maddocks was

slapping each garment out in the air. She was standing aslant, empty wash bath on her hip, the breezeless sheets a white screen for her shadow.

"There 'tis!" she cried in triumph. "But will it dry? B'ain't no wind." Would it dry! Mrs. Ashford sneered to herself as she fingered a twig in the hedge. Would it dry, and the sun gloating on the orchard! She pressed her lips together and walked on quickly.

When she came out of the shop some impulse took her up the steps to the churchyard gate. She stood there eased of some of her misery, for it relaxed her just not to hear the grind of the wind. She waited for the hatred to return and help her home. Her feet were on a cracked stone, her hands folded on the dusty gate, when old Captain Trevor and Mr. Brewer went by below with their sheep-dogs and retrievers, talking.

"Good day, good day," the Captain called. "You down from your eyrie?"

She blinked at them mockingly, mumbling with the old spoon latch, clicking it with her thumb, her face expressing only a kind of humiliating wistfulness. What was an ay-ry—and what had it to do with her hill? So she turned her back on them. "One day I shall lie here, and none to prevent me," she told herself. Up there, where the greyness roamed the bracken, was her home, looking from where she stood, like a white pebble that a boy had flung out of the river. Later on she trod her way upwards with her groceries and a bucket of shallots Mary Maddocks had run out to give her. They were very heavy, but she stopped to gather a handful of bracken, bending the canes over and over to fit her small grate. The climb made her tremble. The wind took her breath and threw it away as if it were nothing. "There's no mercy, no mercy," she began to whimper, feeling her hair blowing awry, and her knees clutched invisibly.



That night old Mrs. Ashford had to bolt her door against the boulders of air the wind rolled against it. The latch and bolt jiggled with each solid blast : the glass in the window rustled, a beast roared in the chimney, and a wet black mark like a footprint appeared under the door.\*

She looked at it. "This is a rare storm that brings me such a visitor," she said.

The rain tumbled down the chimney on the flames.

"My fire's scalded," she said.

She sat down on her fender and began to unravel the shallots. Suddenly, letting her hands fall, she called : "John ? John Ashford ?" She thought a voice had spoken to her aloud. She wasn't afraid. She had many voices inside her, but fear had seldom spoken. Her mind turned and talked to her often enough. Yet this had sounded different. It had come in the gale, now all but through the walls, now backing away, moving it seemed with and among the freakish screams, the lumps of wind, and the long dragging sounds that hung back along the earth.

A slate crashed. "Mrs. Ashford, Mrs. Ashford !"

Mrs. Ashford stood up. "Be you my conscience ?"

"No."

"Then be you my stomach ?"

"No."

"Then you must be the roof going ?"

"No. I'm the wind. And you're a witch." And the roaring rose all round the room, like heatless flame.

"You may be the wind, but I'm no witch."

"Yes you are."

"I'll pummel ye," said she. "Leastways I would if I could see ye. But all I can see is black cobwebs a-shaking in the chimney and soot in the lamp. I never was no witch."

"You've lived alone, and that makes a woman a witch."

"Oh, do it ? Well, be that your footmark ?"

The wind laughed and the sound was like stones leaping in a quarry. Then it seemed to fade, and when it spoke again there was only a tiny distinct vibration, like embers tinkling and creeping when a fire is left alone.

"Come outside and look at me," said this sequestered voice. The gale at that moment stopped ; it was flat calm.

Mrs. Ashford stood on her doorstep, looking to the south-west, where a low black toadstool of cloud gloated over the hollow. She gazed at this evil web in silence, rubbing her little hands. In the doorstone dent lay a handful of starlit rain.

The old woman shook. She waved her fist and shouted : "I don't like you. Get away wind, ugly thing you be !"

The cloud was nearer. Around it the stars shone as in tender piety. "I cannot abear that thing," the old woman said, and she went in and closed the door. But the voice bent itself round the chink before she could thud the bolt : "Where shall I go, where shall I go ?" it uttered shrilly and rapidly.

"Go ?" screamed Mrs. Ashford, "go anywhere. Go down the village and blow down all they great el'ums and rookeries and Captain Trevor's peaches. Haven't them had peace all these years ?"

Her words were repeated, but slowly, as a lesson is read, meditatively, engraving the stillness. Then there was silence. She was alone. Her fingers hovered about her ears as if to catch meanings in the lamplight. But she heard nothing except clock, kettle, and mouse. She felt that she lived in these stirrings. Thoughtfully she went to the cupboard, took down the sugar-basin and flipped a mouse-pill out of it with her thumbnail.

When she opened the door again before going to bed she noticed that the darkness had a strange fallow smell. There was a faint wavy noise. She strained to hear. "'Tis like the weir !" she said staring. On the hill it was as still

as midsummer, with the sheep cropping the hushed mounds. She saw a star sinking slowly as if someone were lowering a candle to the floor. The old woman put out her hand to catch it. . . .

In the morning, looking under the sunrise, she saw the empty floods and the river winding through their vacancy. Red as copper, the dull waters showed seaweed-like patches spread upon them. These were ricks of hay and clover and corn which the wind had lifted and carried away and dropped furlongs from their foundations.

Mrs. Ashford dropped her sticks and ran away down to the village without lighting her fire or even so much as lifting the lid off the bread pan. When she was past the oak tree the breeze fluttered like a flag in her face, but it made no sound at all. She ran into the "Street", holding her left wrist in her right hand, and then she stopped and listened.

Slates were lying on the paths, trees were down, with their roots that had burst the sod, washed bare of earth, and strange sand bars and pearly pebble beaches rippled across the lane.

Most of the doors stood open on the tightly furnished rooms, but nobody stood looking out. It was so quiet except for the cadaverous murmur of the flood that she could hear the puddings snuffling in the saucepans.

She ran on round the bend. Then what a sight! The river had cut the village in half. It had felled the bridge, and was rushing over the road fifty yards wide, and rough and red as a ploughed field.

On the side where Mrs. Ashford was running the slope was abrupt and the houses stood clear above the torrent. But on the far side old Mrs. Griffith's cottage was four feet deep, with a broken door and the green velvet furniture floating in the garden. In the greatest danger was Mrs. Sykes, the baker's wife, at her second-floor window

with her baby up against her cheek. For the river divided from the flood at the corner of her chimney wall, and with enormous pressure split into two, islanding the cottage, with the cage of its partly demolished porch clinging to it like rubble.

Mrs. Sykes was shouting wildly to the people who stood by the water. They did not seem to listen, for they were all telling one another the story of their night. They had remote incredulous expressions on their faces because they could not go to work. The children were crawling out as far as they dared along the broken bridge stones. Captain Trevor was there in a mackintosh cape, prodding the water with his stick. And Mrs. Maddocks, shouting at him, her white cotton bosom overlapping her folded arms. And many others.

"'Twere more like sunset than sunrise, so wild and lonely 'twere," Fred was saying.

Then they all turned round, hearing old Mrs. Ashford running. Her footsteps sounded intelligent, as if they brought an explanation. But the old woman was rushing towards the river without any idea, her arms stretched before her as if she wanted to prevent the waters. She ran right up to the end, and then pulled herself up. She put out her foot and gently paddled her shoe in it. Old Captain Trevor cast her a glance, and then once more plunged his stick in it.

"What I do say is it's come to something when your own roof's blown off you and you're the last to know it," Mrs. Maddocks was screeching at him: "Sitting there mending Fred's shirt I was, and not a notion in the world what was happening till he comes in. 'Mother,' he says, 'do you know the roof's lifting up and down like a rick-cloth?' For God's sake," he says, 'come out and see.'"

Mrs. Ashford looked at her, and angry as she was Mrs. Maddocks politely included her. But a voice that might

have spoken out of the group itself, so monotonous and undistinguished was it, began to recite :—

“ Mrs. Sykes, she be s’ying as she ’ev nowt with ’er for sus-ten-ance but ’alf a pork pie and a crust. And her the baker’s wife ! Charley, ’e been at the bake’ouse all night. What ool ’appen I can’t think, for ’er can’t swim to ’e, and what be good o’ ’e swimming to ’er ? And there b’ain’t no boats in this village.”

“ And all the telephone wires are down. I’ve tried and tried,” said the Captain.

Mrs. Maddocks raised her stern voice again : “ Whose fault is this, I said, when I’d seen. Eh ? Who won’t do the repairs ? Eh ? Who ? Captain, you can take the key this minute if you’ve a mind, for I’m not a woman that will live under a roof that’s tied on me head with wagon ropes as this one be this minute. All me furniture’s out.” And she handed the key out from her armpit where she had been hatching it. The Captain took it gingerly. Mrs. Ashford turned her eyes across the water. She stretched out her arms, and it seemed to her she was stroking the faces in the upper windows. She wanted to say something, but the waters and the gossiping stopped her frail words. Her face was beautiful.

Just then, on the other side, a man came running down the slope in a great coat. It was Charley Sykes. He threw down the coat by the water’s edge. He was in vest and pants. Round his waist he wore a scarf, and tucked into it were two bottles of milk.

“ Ah, brave fellow, brave fellow,” clucked the Captain. “ Many waters cannot drown love. Besides they’re going down. He’ll make it.”

Charley thrust out. His jaw was like a knot under his ear. He seemed to look into all their faces and to live in the look. The current knitted itself round his neck and his separated hands, walking, as it were, before those dark and

frenzied eyes. He plaited his arms in with the water, weaving all three.

In a few minutes he was safe on the shed roof, lifting up a little window under the chimney. Mrs. Syke's face vanished. Everyone shouted and a little boy dropped a flat stone with a ringing splash.

Captain Trevor nodded: "Well done, well done!" He propped his stick against his shaking knees so that he could clap. This made him recognize the key. Mrs. Maddocks was crowdedly cheering with the rest, and for the first time the old man saw what was in his hand: "What's this? A key?" His eyes settled on Mrs. Ashford—eyes like smoky glass. "Want it? She doesn't. Mary always makes up her mind by accident, but when it's done it's done. You're more pliable. You have it. Get you down from that eyrie of yours."

But Mrs. Ashford was no longer beautiful. Her body had dropped that direct expression. She stood twisted in an attitude of crooked secrecy before the Captain, and between their two silent figures flowed a little eddy of air, as it might between two trees.

She shook herself, as you might shake a clock that is stopping, and the slow tired look of secrecy was gradually transferred from one old face to the other, as though by reflection.

And so Captain Trevor and Mrs. Ashford stared silently at each other.

To him it was suddenly revealed that she was not like other old women. At least when you thought of an old woman you did not think of anybody like this one. Old women in the imagination are all alike. But old Mrs. Ashford was nothing you could imagine. She had a child's distinctness, he thought, yet she looked enfeebled, as though in her old age she saw the world by candlelight.

"Won't you have it?" he said.

She shook her head: "I have a friend up there. One that do know where I was born. To live with me."

"A relation?"

"Nearer than that," she said. And then shyly, and, as it were, *wonderingly*, she took a peppermint like a white button out of her pocket and tossed it in her mouth. She turned away and walked slowly up the road, her feet leaving little quiltings in the thin red mud, where the nails in her soles stuck. Under the oak tree she stumbled over the wind as if it had been a dog asleep. It circled round her, blowing a wren out of a bush.

"Well?" it said out of the grass.

The old woman sat down on a stone.

"If you was a beetle I'ood stamp on you," she scolded.

"Oh!"

"Some of them people have been kind to me."

"Then why didn't you take the key and go and live with them?"

She considered this question as if it lay on her lap with her hands. After a pause she said quickly, "*You* didn't ask me that—I asked myself. I can't hardly sort you out from my thoughts," she said, "even when it's quiet like here. I baint got the *use* of a lot of people and voices. I bin too long on Garway. Down there I couldn't hardly tell whether I were glad or sorry. I couldn't seem to *hear*. And that's the reason as I don't want to change my ways now. I do like to hear even the mice in me cupboard, and the cockroaches, I'm that curious and learned. I 'ave got used to them. I've worked with people, not loved them, and now I be done with work I do want to be shut of 'em."

"It can't happen again," said the wind.

"Nor I don't want it should," said she, *\*rising* and beginning to bend over the crackling bracken.

# SHE'S LIKE ME

By ANN CHADWICK

A STICK HAD been laid on the fire to draw the flame through. As it heated, a woodlouse appeared on its surface and hurried indecisively back and forth. When the heat became intolerable under his numerous feet he flung himself on to the coals in despair, curled up with a little hiss and was still.

Her scalp moved on the child's head. She heard her heart beat heavily once and return to its silent pumping. Come on, drink up your tea. Said her Aunt. What are you doing? Gazing in the fire? You're like me, you see things in the fire, don't you?

Now that was the second time someone had asked her that, the child thought. It was one of the stupidest things she had ever been asked. Drink up your tea, said her Aunt, I think that's your Mother come for you. I'll see.

The child looked back for the woodlouse. At first she couldn't find it. Then a flame lived for a moment on its dried body, and it disappeared again. Glowing caverns between the coals fluttered their living atmospheres, flaring carnation and violet, flat, cool, clear colours among the black lumps.

I'm a piece of ash, decided the child, and she fluttered softly down through the smoke into one of the caverns.

When she was inside she had difficulty in keeping her feet. The air of the place moved as one floating, lifting flame; buoyed and swayed her. She leaned against the fire's urge, and let her arms and hair drift above her head. Long avenues of deepening orange buttressed with glowing coals floored with live fire, reached wavering and flickering on all sides. The clear, fluctuating blaze of white and yellow light, that was orange and red at the next moment, fanned past her, enveloping and supporting. The tick and



clink of the burning roof overhead, the soft whisper of the ascending smoke, the breathing roar of the passing points of flame, the flaring sudden sound of little blazes—filled her ears with pleasure. . . . The complete exhaustion of her effortless, cinder body accepted the heat with resistless delight . . . She glowed intensely, without lighting . . .

Her footprints that had traced the scarlet floor with black, faded, because her feet were no longer in contact with the flaring surface. With sickening terror she knew something was going wrong—she caught her breath in a sob, and in a plunge of release shot painfully up, spiralling in draughty smoke, cannoning off gritty buffers of chimney soot, and falling again into the icy air.

She peered in the pale, steady light over the tea table. The cold china held cooling, muddy tea in still, shallow puddles. Stained, milk clouded and repulsive, the cut-glass cream jug flickered in pallid response to the fire. Her Aunt was startlingly close—leaning over her shoulder frowning at the flames. She spoke to the child's mother who stood in the doorway pulling off her gloves. We've had a lovely afternoon, she said. Tensing, she nudged the child intimately—See ! a dog's head in the fire ! She whispered with forced enthusiasm. She straightened. The child's like me, she explained, sees things in the fire.

*Don't* encourage her dear, said the child's mother with a sigh. She has a *fantastic* imagination. It *can't* be good for her. Nonsense, said her Aunt. It never hurt *me*.

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

KEEP THE HOME GUARD TURNING. COMPTON MACKENZIE. Chatto and Windus. 8s.

IN A GENERAL sense this book falls roughly into two parts. The first twelve chapters contain delicate and delicious satire which no Home Guardsman or regular soldier can fail to appreciate. War gives authority to many very little men, and opportunities for pomposity to exceedingly pre-tentious men. Captain Wagett, Brigadier Beamish, and Colonel Lindsay-Wolesay have their living counterparts—although they are not caricatures of specific individuals, as Mr. Mackenzie is careful to state in his preface. But they are the essence, the absolute of military fatuity. Brigadier Beamish's address on "bunching" is so very funny because—dare I say it—many of us have had to listen to similar remarks spoken not in jest. But that was a long time ago, in 1940!

The second part of the book describes a spirited "incident" between the Todday Home Guard "G" Company, and a Company from the mainland, over the little matter of a left-footed boot. This situation is somewhat unreal, and therefore its humour is of a blunter order. But the whole book is funny. Even if you are not a Home Guardsman, or a regular soldier, you may have tried to get into a restricted area; or you may simply be more than rationally interested in eggs. In which case you should certainly read this book.

MAURICE LINDSAY

MR. ROOSEVELT. COMPTON MACKENZIE. Harrap. 17s. 6d.

IT HAS BECOME so fashionable to explain the United States and England to one another that there is a real danger of provoking anger and irritation rather than co-operation. Nobody enjoys being exhibited to his neighbour as if he

were a new exhibit in a local Zoo and it is, therefore, particularly valuable to have a biographical study of one of the great figures of modern times written by an author who combines a deep knowledge of history with practical experience of battle.

It is unnecessary to recapitulate here the events of Roosevelt's life, but it is important in these days of "planning" and blue prints to remember that the future President had no orthodox schooling until he was almost fifteen. He spent much of his early childhood abroad and it is recorded that one day, whilst cycling in Germany with his tutor, he was arrested four times for trivial cycling offences. He desired passionately to become a sailor, and the amazing thing about his development is to watch its continuity, his present actions unfold not as if forced upon him by a Europe at war, but because they are the logical result of early preparation for a given task.

Mr. Compton Mackenzie uses his great skill and scholarship to make the unfamiliar world of American politics vivid and alive, whilst never permitting the reader's attention to stray from the central figure of this study. There are many photographs, and some interesting charts of the main events of the times and of Roosevelt's life so that the volume can well serve as an introduction to modern American history. The book ends with his election as President in 1932.

A knowledge of the American attitude towards England and Europe is essential if we wish to understand the post-war world, and this book is particularly valuable as a background and is, as well, as easy to read and remember as a good novel.

LAMBERT STONE

THE ROBBER BRIDEGROOM. EUDORA WELTY.

Lane. 8s. 6d.

MISS WELTY, who created something of a stir with

her first volume of stories, has, in *The Robber Bridegroom*, written something entirely different, for this book has all the essentials of the fairy-tale, and to get a fairy tale from the United States is a surprise and a delight. The blurb on the wrapper describes it as "a fantasy of almost novel length", and goes on to say that "whether it is an allegory, an experiment in symbolism, or a parody in fable form of early pioneering America, the reader must judge for himself."

To one reader it is pure fairy-tale; it has all its ingredients, it is mad, absurd, ethereal, with now and then the grisly bones of realism peeking through. There is something delicate, highly coloured about this story, which at the same time can often be as cold as a spring frost. The craziness of it is that of the Irish folk-tale, with its outsize human figures, legendary beings, and yet it is never purely whimsy, or self-conscious, or even Walt Disneyish, but just plain fairy tale, and the first, I should think, that has come out of the United States in modern times. Mr. James Holland's illustrations link beautifully into the text: he was the ideal illustrator for this story. Indeed, the whole production is, in these shoddy days, a real pleasure to look at. It seems a long time since any publisher offered us a book with illustrations, in this kind of book, half real, half fable.

JAMES HANLEY

FIREMAN FLOWER. WILLIAM SANSOM. Hogarth Press.  
8s. 6d.

THE ALLEGORICAL METHOD of writing has been practised to advantage in times when either a uniform moral order with certain set values was widely accepted, or, conversely, when the established faith, or faiths, had broken down: in the first case, allegory was used for propagandizing the teachings of the orthodox church; in the latter phase this form has been used in the search of new values. The

allegories and fables of the life of the Buddha in India and China, as also the parables of Medieval Hinduism and Medieval Christianity, are examples of the former, while such allegorical writing as has been practised since the eighteenth century in Europe by people like Swift and Bunyan shows the trend of the second kind of fantasy. But throughout all the allegorical writing till the nineteenth century the didactic purpose is uniformly pronounced, for the orthodox values still hold and the criticism of them aims at rediscovery rather than the elaboration of new values.

It is only with the contemporary Kafka that the fictitious illusion achieves importance, because in the twentieth century all the old ideals have broken down and the symbols of the accepted moral code are tending to give place to the tentative hypotheses of psychology. Hence the incredible complexity of Kafka's novels, as also the electric atmosphere, pregnant with crisis. And, though Kafka died before he could establish the myth he desired, of the kind of world he could have believed in without going the whole hog with Christianity, the measure of his success lies in his awareness of the need for the "true way".

The allegory of Rex Warner has an organic connection with reality and, therefore, the symbols it involves are fairly easily comprehensible. The fantasy of the *Wild Goose Chase* derives as much force from the attempt to bring the novel nearer to poetry as from the purpose which informs it.

Mr. Sansom also writes a beautiful prose. His narrative achieves poetic tension, as the best prose often does, without using lovely words but through an emotive force in the writing as such. His symbolism, too, mostly draws upon the subconscious and the unconscious as does Mr. Warner's. But the metaphor here is often more obscure because more personal. This may arise from Mr. Sansom's

preference for the deepest depths of the yet uncharted seas, but not every dive can yield pearls, if there be too much wreckage lying about at the bottom of the sea. There is one great story in Mr. Sansom's collection, *The Wall*, where the writer's imagination has completely realized the uncanny possibilities of chance. And some of the other almost straight stories shine like diamonds, so finely have they been chiselled. Equally the more obvious fantasies like that of *Pansovic and the Spiders* and the *Forbidden Lighthouse* come off completely. But though the urgency and the immediacy of Mr. Sansom's sense of experience is brought home, there are only vague hints as to the kind of symbols he would like us to accept. Altogether, however, the volume evidences to a sensibility of the first order.

MULK RAJ ANAND

A BOOK OF RUSSIAN VERSE. Edited by C. M. BOWRA. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.

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## FRENCH REVIEWS

FONTAINE, Nos. 29, 30, 32.

L'ARCHE, No. 1. (3 Rue Pelissier, Alger.)

RENAISSANCES. No. 1. (4 rue Bourlon, Alger.)

WHEN AT LEAST a few magazines trickle in from Algiers we realize how wide a gulf exists between ourselves and European thought.

First of all, there is now a deep psychological rift between us. We have never felt defeated. We could have withdrawn from this war at its start but as a whole nation, we rose, we preferred liberty. In 1940 Europe nowhere had this burning conception of freedom. Too many desired to substitute an exterior for an interior conscience. Reading through these magazines of "liberation" I find still too many pleading for the State or the Church or even Political Economy, to take over their conflicts and "direct" their thoughts. Yet it was not freedom that was responsible for the fall of France but the failure to be free.

The first impact of these reviews demonstrates that the outstanding leaders are men such as Gide and Malraux who faced the conflict in the early thirties and were thus equipped to dominate it when it came and to emerge the greater for their experiences. The piece of French prose that stands out the clearest in memory is André Gide's description (printed elsewhere) of the entrance of the Allied forces into Tunis. He was then himself in hiding from the Germans, but it is not a record of his personal liberation and has an epic quality, is of the struggle between light and darkness. His *Appel* in *L'Arche* is a pendant to it, where he insists upon the fundamental value to France being harmony and balance, both in thought and geography, with the Huguenot (and none has battled more bravely) and the Latin. Then comes a superb fragment from



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Malraux's novel, *Camp du Chartres*, the best record of a prisoner of war that I have read, with its unforgettable sentence, "Ici écrire est le seul moyen de continuer à vivre."

There are a number of stories that whether fiction or no, are based upon the underground movement and have a sharp contemporary interest. There are notes on the literary and artistic world of Paris often terrifying in their implications, when they hint at this or that writer having accepted collaboration.

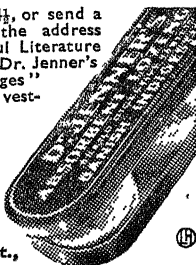
*Fontaine* is the more general in scope of these magazines. It contains several translations and also articles on a re-valuation of certain French classic writers, possibly of more value to the individual at a time of disaster than of general interest. *L'Arche* has a particularly good first number, with many interesting articles and stories. *Renaissances* is political and not literary in scope, but there is an excellent survey of French education by Louis Garnet, and a suggestion that the Swiss army was more successful in making military service a willingly accepted part of citizen life than the French method in "L'Armée dans la Nation". We deplore, on the other hand, a political note on English aims; it suggests that only those who wish to establish a capitalistic world are pro-American. England and the States are mixed (whether anybody likes this or not) by ties of blood, language, and outlook more than we could ever be, with Europe. There is plenty of scope for co-operation but not for disunity.

A chief task of this present period is to pour into England as many books as possible from liberated territories. We need to know what Europe actually thinks. The strain on the individual there has been immense for he has had often to fight collaboration in his own family or circle as well as the enemy. Undernourishment causes irritation and there has been little authentic news of our own battle.

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REMEMBERED FOR EVER. BERNARD MCGINN. Allen and Unwin. 3s. 6d.

Mr. Bernard McGinn's *Remembered For Ever* may be described as a *bottega* piece by Amico di Casside; but this story of a half-forgotten hero of the Irish Rebellion intervening at the unveiling of his own monument is not an imitation of O'Casey. Although a frank school-piece it emanates from a creative impulse; its grand set-scene at the crisis is excellently done, and in every stage of the story's development there is some scene or vignette which has the virtue of a painting of low life by Teniers or Wilkie. It only falls short in the reading by the lack of personality and power in the depiction of the hero, Brosnan; the text gives us little more than a symbol, a token of a protagonist's attitude. It is easily possible that enough is given to enable a gifted player to fill this token with his own personality, and thus present a Brosnan who becomes real and convinces an audience in the process. Indeed, Mr. Lennox Robinson, in his understanding preface to the play, suggests that this happened in the Abbey Theatre production; and he speaks with the double experience of a man-of-letters and a master of theatrecraft. If Mr. McGinn discovers that he can use his central figure to unify his quite vivid episodes, and in the process share their vitality with it, his next play may well be a considerable work. Yet it should be noted, also, that, if this play were a complete achievement, its catastrophe would still seem inadequate outside Ireland; for in this mid-twentieth century there can be few other places where it would seem possible that the ardent admirers who have raised the statue should be

# TRANSFORMATION 2

*edited by*

**STEFAN SCHIMANSKI and HENRY TREECE**

*will be published in July and will contain*

*Articles on Education* by HERBERT READ, PAUL BLOOMFIELD, A. S. NEILL, STEPHEN SPENDER, the Rev. E. F. F. HILL, and GRAHAM THOMAS.

*New Poems* by RICHARD CHURCH, MORWENNA DONNELLY, IAN SERRAILLIER, ALAN ROSS, and a *Verse Play* by CYRIL SAUNDERS.

*The Architectural Section* is introduced by LEWIS MUMFORD, and contains articles by JANE DREW and J. B. S. COMPER ; ERIC NEWTON discusses the work of HENRY MOORE, PAUL NASH, and GRAHAM SUTHERLAND.

There are *stories* by HENRY TREECE, ALAN STOREY, MONICA STIRLING, and the first translation of Bunin's celebrated long mythological study, *Cicadas*.

The *War and Writing* section is continued with *essays* by RICHARD CHURCH, PATRICIA LEDWARD, and HARRY ROSKOLENKO.

From America, too, come *critical studies* by HENRY MILLER and KENNETH BURKE, which together with literary essays by MICHAEL HAMBURGER and STEFAN SCHIMANSKI, complete this volume.

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able to offer as a plausible reason for casting out their hero and tearing down his statue that he had fathered a child outside wedlock—and before his heroic hour had struck.

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THE TURNING POINT. KLAUS MANN. Gollancz.  
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KLAUS MANN HAD unique opportunities for studying European literature between the two wars and this is a book that should be read by historians of that time. Here is an artist of fine perceptions who has travelled widely and read extensively in several languages, who was able to mix with some of the best intellects of the day and yet is the arch-type of those writers (we had plenty here as well) who, because they had lost the gift of prophecy, complained that the poet was out of touch with the people!

The author gradually becomes aware of the Nazi danger but never once does he show any appreciation of the solid British Protestant spirit that eventually got up and battled for liberty of thought. It was perhaps the fault of Europe to see too many sides of the same question and thereby to forget the primitive virtues. All the same the book should have a wide appeal, partly to those who remember Paris of the late twenties and in general for all who want the post-war years, that we hope are near, to be different from 1919.

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